BER

PUBLISHED
TWICE A MONTH

Adventure

THE UNIVERSITY
OF TEXAS
FEB 15 1943
THE LIBRARY

Digitized by Google

"I Got the Job!"

"I'm to be Manager of my Department starting Monday. The boss said he had been watching all the men. When he found I had been studying at home with the International Correspondence Schools he knew I had the right stuff in me—that I was bound to make good. Now we can move over to that house on Oakland Avenue and you can have a maid and take things easy. I tell you, Nell, taking that course with the I. C. S. was the best thing I ever did."

Spare-time study with the I. C. S. is winning promotions for thousands of men and bringing happiness to thousands of homes all over the world. In offices, shops, stores, mines, mills and on railroads, I. C. S. trained men are stepping up to big jobs, over the heads of older men, past those whose only qualification is long service.

There is a job ahead of *you* that some man is going to be picked for. The boss can't take chances. When he selects the one to hold it he is going to choose a trained man with sound, practical knowledge of the work. Get busy right now and put yourself in line for that promotion. You can do it in spare time in your own home through the International Correspondence Schools, just as nearly two million men have done in the last twenty-five years, just as more than 100,000 men are doing today.

The first step these men took was to mark and mail this coupon. Make *your* start the same way—and make it right now.

TEAR OUT HERE

INTERNATIONAL CORRESPONDENCE SCHOOLS
BOX 2015, SCRANTON, PA.

Explain, without obligating me, how I can qualify for the position, or in the subject, *before* which I mark X.

- ☐ ELECTRICAL ENGINEER
- ☐ Electric Lighting
- ☐ Electric Railways
- ☐ Electric Wiring
- ☐ Telegraph Engineer
- ☐ Telephone Work
- ☐ MECHANICAL ENGINEER
- ☐ Mechanical Draftsman
- ☐ Machine Shop Practice
- ☐ Gas Engine Operating
- ☐ CIVIL ENGINEER
- ☐ Surveying and Mapping
- ☐ MINE FOREMAN OR ENGINEER
- ☐ Metallurgist or Prospector
- ☐ STATIONARY ENGINEER
- ☐ Marine Engineer
- ☐ ARCHITECT
- ☐ Contractor and Builder
- ☐ Architectural Draftsman
- ☐ Concrete Builder
- ☐ Structural Engineer
- ☐ PLUMBING AND HEATING
- ☐ Sheet Metal Worker
- ☐ Textile Overseer or Supt.
- ☐ CHEMIST
- ☐ SALESMANSHIP
- ☐ ADVERTISING
- ☐ Window Trimmer
- ☐ Show Card Writer
- ☐ Sign Painter
- ☐ Railroad Trainman
- ☐ ILLUSTRATING
- ☐ Cartooning
- ☐ BOOKKEEPER
- ☐ Stenographer and Typist
- ☐ Cert. Public Accountant
- ☐ TRAFFIC MANAGER
- ☐ Railway Accountant
- ☐ Commercial Law
- ☐ GOOD ENGLISH
- ☐ Teacher
- ☐ Common School Subjects
- ☐ Mathematics
- ☐ CIVIL SERVICE
- ☐ Railway Mail Clerk
- ☐ AUTOMOBILE OPERATING
- ☐ Auto Repairing
- ☐ Navigation
- ☐ AGRICULTURE
- ☐ Poultry Raising
- ☐ Spanish
- ☐ German
- ☐ French
- ☐ Italian

Name _____

Present Occupation _____

Street and No. _____

City _____ State _____

Digitized by Google

THE LIBRARY
THE UNIVERSITY
OF TEXAS

Adventure

FIRST OCTOBER ISSUE 1917

Vol. 15 No. 1

Published Twice a Month by THE RIDGWAY COMPANY

J. H. GANNON, President — GEORGE B. MALLON, Secretary and Treasurer

Spring and Macdougal Streets - - New York City
6, Henrietta St., Covent Garden, London, W. C., England

Entered at the New York Post-Office as Second-Class Matter

ARTHUR SULLIVANT HOFFMAN, Editor

Contents for First October Issue, 1917

Dangerous Men *A Complete Novel* . . . . . **Gordon Young** 3

When a master criminal crosses purposes with a steel-nerved unflinching adventurer and gambler in the great game of life, there can be no truce—one must conquer, the other succumb. San Francisco is where their tracks cross.

Sometimes Known as Fate Poem . . . . . **Charles C. Jones** 73

The Test of Umalgi . . . . . **Robert J. Pearsall** 74

Captain Lansdale, a young army officer in the Philippines, has been asserting the authority of the U. S. so vigorously that the native priests decide to do away with him. Umalgi, the volcano, is the chosen instrument of their vengeance.

Ten Million Ems of Nonpareil . . . . . **William Carlton Davis** 85

Meet *Johnnie Trib,* printer's devil, whose hatred for the "dirty sneakin' little type" that prick his fingers, gives him as strange a life desire as ever a man had. This story tells of that desire's fulfilment.

Imitations . . . . . **Pierre de Lanux and Lawton Mackall** 94

The French are good fighters. They are also good story-tellers. When a Frenchman and an American join hands in either of these jobs the result is likely to be worth while. For example, this story.

That Fool, Pete . . . . . **E. E. Harriman** 101

To the rest of the little Western town carrying the mail represents nothing but the salary it entails; but to Pete it is an honor and a sacred trust, a duty not to be neglected even at the point of a gun.

An Officer and a Gentleman . . . . . **Gordon McCreagh** 107

In the U. S. Navy you meet men of this kind—officers who are men enough to drop the bars between themselves and the enlisted men—and seamen who can appreciate a man even though he be their enemy.

Gaston Olaf and Big Business *A Four-Part Story. Part III* . **Henry Oyen** 116

Gaston Olaf proves too strong an opponent, so the corporation resorts to powerful weapons—starvation and the law. In this instalment the thrilling struggle between man and money in the North woods reaches its height. If you have missed the first two parts, you will find them briefly retold in story-form.

(Continued on next page)

Digitized by Google

(Continued from preceding page)

The Burden of Hate . . . . . **Octavus Roy Cohen** 143

Miles from other human habitation, for years *Andrew Dougall* and *Steven Ballentyne*, dwelt in a dense South Carolina swamp, nursing their hatred and awaiting the hour of reckoning. It came at night in the midst of a tropical storm.

Honest to Doughgod . . . . . **W. C. Tuttle** 147

The new school-teacher at Paradise stirs the romantic hearts of three cow-punchers. But their response is far from ordinary. The results of the courtship would make even a stoic smile.

A Gaucho's Defiance *Poem* . . . . . **Richard Butler Glaenzer** 159

His Excellency, The Vulture . . . . . **H. A. Lamb** 160

Francis Drake, the scourge of Spanish galleons and treasure-ships, roving the Pacific in the *Golden Hind*, makes a memorable visit to the court of the Governor of Peru.

Twilight Jack . . . . . **Kathrene and Robert Pinkerton** 172

Committed miles from human habitation in a blinding snow-storm, in the woods of the North country. the murder seemed safe enough. But the elements hold no secrets from *Twilight Jack*, the woodsman.

The Camp-Fire A Free-to-All Meeting-Place for Readers, Writers and Adventurers . . . 179

Adventure's Free Services and Addresses 185

Ask Adventure 186

Lost Trails 191

The Trail Ahead 192

Headings . . . . . **Will Crawford**

Now that *Adventure* is published twice a month, it will be only two weeks—September 18—before you get the

MID-OCTOBER ADVENTURE

One of the good things you'll find in it is the first instalment (size of a complete novelette) of a four-part story by that old favorite

TALBOT MUNDY

Old readers of *Adventure* will need no other recommendation than the author's name; new readers—will see for themselves. **"Hira Singh's Tale"** is the biggest story Talbot Mundy has ever written.

"FROM THE SEAS"

By J. ALLAN DUNN

is another headliner by one of our most popular writers. And it is the kind of tale that most of us never tire of hearing—a regular old-time pirate story of the Spanish Main.

For the other stories in Mid-October, turn to "Trail Ahead," page 192

Issued Monthly. **Yearly Subscription, $1.50 in advance.** **Single copy, fifteen cents.**

Foreign postage, $1.00 additional. Canadian postage, 30 cents.

Trade-Mark Registered; Copyright, 1917, by The Ridgway Company in the United States and Great Britain.

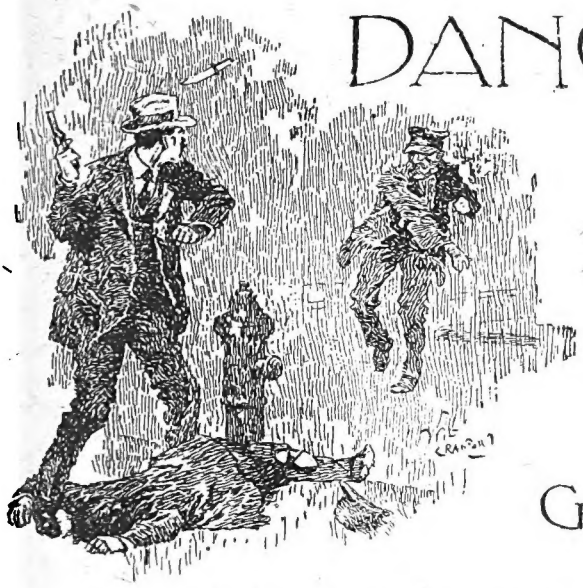
The editor assumes no risk for manuscripts and illustrations submitted to this magazine, but he will use all due care while they are in his hands.

Digitized by Google

THE LIBRARY
THE UNIVERSITY
OF TEXAS

Adventure
FIRST OCTOBER ISSUE 1917
Vol. 15 No. 1

DANGEROUS MEN



A COMPLETE NOVEL

by

Gordon Young

Author of "A Royal Flush of Hearts," and "Bluff and a Little Luck," etc.

IT WAS past midnight, a bit chilly, with the trace of a fog in the air as though some monstrous ghost had floated over the city and had left patches of gray drapery clinging to the tops of high buildings. I was not in a pleasant mood. A number of things had gone wrong. I was much younger in those days than I am now, and I was a trifle more reckless, too.

So when I heard a scream and the clatter of feet on the pavement coming toward me, instead of discreetly waiting in a doorway to see the nature of the trouble, I drew a gun and ducked forward.

A distant arc-light stabbed at the fog-streaked darkness, and somewhere in the heavens a full moon was hidden behind a film of cloud; the night was not black, and the blotched outlines of buildings were thrust from the murky gray mass that seemed a few hundred feet away as solid, impenetrable, as a granite wall. It was not a black night, but no object stood clear and distinct if a stone's throw away.

Two figures appeared out of the gray darkness. They were coming so close together that I thought at first both fled from a common terror. My blood in those days was ever hot and lustful for danger, but the cry that split the air again and again gave me startled pause. I had seen men die, but I had never heard such sounds of terror. It was a horrible cry for help and plea for mercy—one short cry after another, like those of a man in agony and gasping in screams. Rapidly they came toward me.

I saw that the larger man was the pursuer, and the long knife he carried caught a glint from the distant arc-light. Plainly, it seemed to me in that instant, he was not

Copyright, 1917, by The Ridgway Company in the United States and Great Britain. All rights reserved.

Digitized by Google

bent on making deadly use of his knife for he was close enough to strike, and running easily; but his intentions seemed to be murderous as soon as the smaller, terrified man caught sight of me.

The smaller man's feet seemed suddenly winged. He cried out for help in such a changed, direct, appealing tone that the big man must have glanced ahead and seen me too; for instantly the repeated downward stroke of the bright knife showed that he was trying furiously to drive the the blade home.

I shot. The smaller man came on and sank gasping at my feet as though he were wounded to death. The other man stopped. He was yards away. I could not see his features even faintly; but his body was huge.

He laughed, and in his laugh was everything but mirth: rage, mockery and insolence. Then, before I had an idea as to what he was up to, a knife coming point first whizzed past my head and struck the pavement.

I had shot the first time impersonally to prevent murder, and without trying to bring the man down. But he had flung that knife at me instead of at the man sprawled unconscious at my feet; and though as he threw it he leaped to one side and rushed for the shadowed leeway of the buildings, I shot again.

He cried out as a wounded beast snarls, but kept running. I could hear his feet long after I had lost sight of the dim form that melted away into the gray, granite walls of foggy darkness. I didn't know where he was hit, but he was lucky not to be dead when I had shot at him in earnest.

Hurling that knife at my head gave me a sort of companionable feeling for the man terrified senseless on the pavement. I didn't, of course, know what their quarrel was about; and I didn't care. I knew that a pocketbook or a woman is back of all quarrels between men; and I could understand why the smaller man ran; but I could not understand why he had wasted his precious breath in such shameless cries of terror. When it comes one's time to die there is no use to make a halloo about it.

I didn't expect either the shots or the cries would attract any one, unless some policeman new to duty on San Francisco's force was conscientiously patroling the deserted street, which ran a block or so from the harbor front and was lined with warehouses. Personally, I didn't care how many policemen showed up. I never annoy them with my troubles, and they have never had much reason for believing that I have had any part in theirs.

I wasn't sure how my newly acquired companion would feel about meeting a conscientious patrolman, so I hoisted him to his feet, drew one of his arms about my neck, and encircling his body with one of my own, I carried him down the street. He was much smaller and lighter than I; and older, too, as I saw when we came to the arc-light.

He was, I judged, not quite into middle age, and had finely formed features. I suppose that most any woman would have thought him handsome; but a man who is thirty-five should have a touch of iron in his face—something there that shows he has had his spirit and flesh worked over at forge. The face was handsome and selfish. There are faces that are too handsome to be strong. I thought his was such a face; or it may be that coming to know him better, I merely now look back and think that then I thought it. I know I marked his handsome features and the lack of muscle around the jaw.

But quite distinctive was his dress, his rings, his watchfob and tie-pin. I know a bit about values in gold, gems and cloth; and I can tell the work of a good tailor at a glance. This man was dressed, not as one does who makes a splurge for a week on the Barbary Coast or for a longer period in some of the apartment houses that morally should be on the Coast, but like one accustomed to wearing expensive things—though not with the best of taste.

He had on altogether too much jewelry for any man—unless, of course, he is tending bar, and his stockings were red and his tie was green, splotched with red flowers.

I examined him again under the light to make sure that he had not been injured. His trousers were torn at the knees and his hands were scratched from where he had fallen on the pavement; but that was the only injury that I could find.

So I began jostling him around somewhat less carefully. I pinched his nose and slapped his cheeks, prodded him in the ribs and so energetically beset him that it was but a few minutes before he showed signs of life.

Digitized by Google

"Wake up. Wake up," I urged. "You've had a bad dream and made a lot of fuss."

With the first gleam of consciousness he returned to his old terror. His eyes stared at me uncomprehendingly.

"Where is he?"

"He left in haste," I said.

We talked for some time before he gradually realized just what had happened. He remembered seeing and running toward me, remembered the shot—and nothing more. He was very grateful. He asked in what way he could reward me, but I did not ask for anything. I never seek favors of any man; so when he asked me to say who I was, I replied that I didn't see how that had anything to do with the situation.

"It does," he insisted.

He went on to explain that he needed a friend, a man whom he could trust; that his life was perpetually in danger and that it seemed that sooner or later every precaution he took would be ineffectual in keeping his enemies from striking.

He explained that as a matter of security he lived aboard his yacht with his wife and her sister, and that the captain and the crew were picked men; but twice some one had fired through a port-hole, once the wine was found to be poisoned, and once a bomb was found moored amidship. He wanted a brave companion. He had wanted one for a long time, but hadn't known where to find one who could be trusted.

There was no doubt, he said—though little he knew of it—about my bravery; and since I had already saved his life he was sure that I could be trusted.

"So you are Melville Summers?" I asked.

Perhaps—and there was good reason for it, too—a very strong note of interest came in my voice.

I knew there was only one steam yacht in the bay—that was a thing of beauty and expense. It was precious little that the so-called "lucky" Mr. Summers needed to care about expense. But I knew nothing about him and scarcely more about his wife than the newspapers had made known to every one to whom their clangorous headlines reached. So far as I was aware, however, there had been no word about his mysterious dangers in the papers.

But I knew a great deal about Vivian Rublee, his wife's sister; so much in fact that it was rather startling to find myself unexpectedly face to face with her brother-in-law.

Vivian was a fascinating girl. She had considered herself fascinating enough when I knew her to play a hazardous game of coquetry. I often thought of her. As a matter of fact, in my lonesome moments I seldom thought of any one else. I was not eager to meet her again. Our parting had not been pleasant.

Woman-like, she had wilfully misunderstood me; worse, she had pretended that I misunderstood her. But if she had fallen into misfortune or was in danger—well, I have often gone far out of my way to help people I did not know and for whom I had never cared and who had no claim to my help.

I did not tell him anything about that. I wondered very deeply, though, what she would say when I was introduced to her as "Mr. Everhard"—for that was the name I had taken from her own lips and carried with me around the world. Many people knew it, and knew it well, too. I often wondered if she had heard it, and if she ever associated it with me.

II

MR. SUMMERS was timid about prowling around on the water-front for a launch that would take us out to the *Hesperus*. He shied away from shadows; and was frequently startled into a convulsive gesture of alarm. He didn't hesitate to get on the lee side of me when we approached a corner. I understood his excessive nervousness: he had been terrified to within a hair's breadth of lunacy, and even brave, hard-headed men are jerky and jumpy after a bad scare.

I didn't feel contemptuous toward him though he acted much like a small boy going into a dark room after reading bear stories. Even in those impulsive years, I had almost quit judging people and saying this act was shameful and that was noble unless I knew something of the cause.

Behind us all there stand a host of invisible Briareuses pushing and shoving us with their myriad hands into this and that mood and act; and while I have always been quick enough to tell a man what I think of him and his ways, it was only in my very, very young days that I wouldn't stop to listen, too, if he cared to explain.

Digitized by Google

So while I didn't feel contemptuous toward Mr. Summers, or set him down as a whimpering coward—a big man with a long knife in a dark street would sadly shake the best nerves—I was not carried away by the fact that he was Vivian's brother-in-law to the point of feeling that he was anything more than a common sort of man, fortunately rich.

Perhaps I am suspicious by nature. Certainly experience has done much to make me think that one cannot be too suspicious of strangers. On the other hand I try to be fair. Some of the worst men I have ever known have had just those traits that appealed to me and for which I have looked in vain many times and often among highly accredited gentlemen.

So one can't tell much about a man by the mere fact that he is good or bad, a coward or courageous: often enough good men have never been tempted, and the courageous have no imagination.

Mr. Summers was inclined to want to be reticent about the big man and the long knife. But I never approve of reticence in other people when I am curious. He said he would tell me about it later.

"We have nothing else to talk about now," I replied.

He looked at me curiously, as though he didn't know whether to be amused or angry.

"Who are you?" he asked.

Considering that we had almost agreed to be friends and that I was to return with him aboard his yacht for an indefinite period, I didn't think there was any objection to telling him.

"Donald Everhard," I said.

Apparently he had not heard of that name before. It would have saved him some moments of embarassment if he had.

"It may be foolish of me," he said, "to take up this way with a stranger when I have to be cautious with friends. But you know, my man, there's something about you I like."

He was pretty well over his fright. We had come down almost to the Ferry Building where there were a few people and many lights, and Mr. Summers was beginning to feel himself again.

I stopped walking and putting an arm on his shoulder turned him so that we stood face to face.

"Mr. Summers," I said, "if you are looking for a footman or valet, I suggest that you go over to San Rafael or Burlingame and bid against some of your fellow millionaires. But don't 'my man' me. I was and am ready to come with you, not knowing what kind of trouble I am likely to get into, because I am able to take care of myself. If you want me for a companion, all right. But I am not on a salary.

"When you address me, address me as Mr. Everhard. And when I talk to you, keep your eyes on mine till I am through. I give you my word to do what I can to keep harm from reaching you, but I am no private detective or personal guard. If you wish to look at my relation toward you in any such light, then I shall say good morning to you and forget the incident. Have I made myself understood?"

For a few moments Mr. Summers looked as though he were getting into a rage. I suppose men who are extremely rich are exasperated when they find their aura of wealth somewhat ignored. When one man looks another between the eyes there is no thought of money or social position. The impact of gaze on gaze is the duel primeval. Kings have flinched before the steady stare of their jesters; millionaires before the eyes of wastrels they pass in the street.

There was nothing angry or threatening in my words or face. I had told him just how I felt, and told him plainly. He looked me over carefully, and I could see him getting less and less indignant. Then he said inpulsively:

"By God, I like that! You've talked plainly to me, I'll talk plainly to you. For the past two years I've hired every man that came near me and stayed. If I stopped the pay of any one he would leave instantly. Money, money, money will buy any man—yes, his soul too! My life is miserable. I have no friends. I can have no friends. Only servants. When I asked you to come as a friend, of course I expected to pay you." He extended his hand and I took it. But I said:

"You understand, Mr. Summers, that in the little affairs that arise from time to time and in which I take part, I do more than keep inside the law. I do what I think is right, which is more than the law always does."

He wanted to know what I meant; and I told him just that. He said that he didn't understand. I suggested that he

Digitized by Google

think it over. He looked at me again in the puzzled, curious way he had, as though he didn't know what to think and was inclined to be disagreeable; but in the end he gave a queer soft laugh without much humor in it and said that I was a strange fellow.

I didn't take the time to point out that he was mistaken. There is nothing strange about me. I am simply plain-spoken. When I want a man to know a thing I tell him. When I want to know a thing, I ask it.

So I asked him again just how he had come to be in the scrape I found him. I could see that he didn't want to speak of it, and the very remembrance seemed to make him nervous for he looked about the empty street apprehensively, and as a man staggered out of a saloon some doors away, Mr. Summers stopped and watched him.

I never taunt or jest with a man whose nerves are shaken; but as he watched the staggering fellow so closely, I said:

"If you recognize him as anybody that's likely to meddle in your business, I'll go up and have a word with him."

Mr. Summers said no. But he continued to watch the man. Mr. Summers was just plainly scared. The more I studied his face the less I liked it; and when I dislike a man's face there is something wrong with him, no matter if I can't tell exactly what it is. I haven't exactly a friendly nature, perhaps, but I dislike very few people.

Mr. Summers tried to explain his attitude by saying that he was in such continual danger that he was afraid of every one.

"We are all in danger—my wife, and her sister too, as I told you. And none of us knows why. We haven't the faintest idea. Not the faintest."

"No?" I asked.

"No. Not the faintest," he repeated again.

I wasn't quite ready to believe that. It is very difficult sometimes to know when a man is telling the truth; and though I seldom question a man's word unless I am rather certain he ought to have it questioned, I did go so far as to say: "That's mysterious, isn't it? You must have some kind of an idea—have reasoned it out some way or other."

The drunken man had come up to us and stood swaying unsteadily. Mr. Summers stepped away and edged to my back. The drunken man was short, dressed in dungaree and blue flannel shirt and had several days' growth of beard. He blinked at me; and then his eyes seemed to grow steadier; he straightened up a bit and silently extended a hard grimy hand, profanely but cordially insisting that he knew me. He did. He called me by name. I couldn't place him.

He went on to say in the garrulous manner of one who has had too much to drink that we had never been introduced, or anything like that, but that he had been the boatswain on the *Nellie H.* and that he knew all about me and was glad of the chance to shake my hand, and wouldn't I and my friend come with him and have a drink.

SOME months before I had returned from Australia on the *Nellie H.* but had kept below deck almost all the way over to give the bullet wound in my leg a chance to heal. The captain was a personal friend of mine, and seemed to think I had carried myself rather well in a bad scrape I and some friends of mine had got into over some gold that really belonged to us; and no doubt the captain had talked to some of the men on the bridge so that reports of myself were carried forward into the forecastle.

The papers in Australia had a word or two to say about it, and when I arrived in San Francisco, friends of mine showed me quite an account of it in the *Chronicle.* All of which in no way had anything to do with Mr. Summers and his dangers; except that I had rather expected that he would have heard of me.

I did what the boatswain probably expected I would do. I gave him a dollar, and said that my friend and I didn't care for anything to drink. The boatswain shook my hand again, and to Mr. Summers's discomfiture and surprise insisted on shaking hands with him because he was a friend of mine.

Personally, I have a strong liking for the men who go down to sea in sailing-ships; and though I never drink myself, I feel kindly toward the men with calloused hands who do. I was then some two or three years above thirty—but as for that, I had learned in my teens that the best of men often drink more than is good for their heads; and though I am perhaps a little fastidious about what I have on my back,

Digitized by Google

I don't think much about the clothes that other people wear.

I was both embarrassed and pleased by meeting the boatswain as we did. I felt embarrassed to have him recounting—garbling the facts, but doing my reputation no injury—what he had heard of the fight and how I had made three bushrangers haul two wounded friends of mine on an improvised sled something over a hundred miles to a doctor. I was pleased that Mr. Melville Summers was hearing it. I thought it might do him some good, for he had seemed to think I was merely a queer sort of a fellow.

That had been a long hard trip, but not the least bit exciting or dangerous even, because I had tied my bushrangers up carefully at night. When I tie a man up there isn't much chance of his getting loose. Moreover, I kept a little wad of cloth stuffed in their ears so they couldn't plot very well.

But perhaps most impressive of all was the little exhibition of my ability to hit things with a revolver. To impress firmly upon their minds that I could shoot quickly and accurately, I had made each in turn hold a cigaret in his mouth; then wheeling at five paces I had shot it out—and never touched a nose. My bushrangers were very docile after that.

I did nothing to interrupt the boatswain, for I could see that Mr. Summers was not bored. And after the boatswain with a parting handshake for each of us, and the offer of his friendship and help any time I needed them, had gone, Mr. Summers looked at me with a new expression in his eyes. He didn't seem to know just what to say. I didn't care whether he said anything or not, for I felt that he now knew I didn't use empty words when I talked.

Without waiting for him to pay any compliments or make any explanations, I jumped back to where the boatswain had interrupted our conversation, and reminded him that he must have some kind of an idea as to who was so desperately menacing the lives of himself and his wife. He was still reluctant about talking; but I told him that as I was more or less putting myself up alongside him as a target, I wanted to know as much about who was doing the shooting and knifing as was possible for him to tell me.

He used many more words than were necessary to explain that he and his wife had come into great wealth, and that as these attacks had started only after his wife's uncle had died, he thought perhaps anarchists were striking at them.

"Have you received threatening letters?" I asked.

He studied longer than was necessary to answer a simple question, then said that he had.

"Do they demand money?"

"Yes."

"Who signs them?"

"Nobody."

"What do the letters say?"

"That they will get me."

"I thought they demanded money."

"Oh yes, they do."

"Well. How and to whom do they want you to pay it?"

Mr. Summers hesitated, then said he was instructed from time to time to leave a large quantity of gold in specified places.

"Why haven't you told the Federal officers and trapped the blackmailers?"

"Why, I never thought of that!"

I had not expected such a stupid evasion as that from him. We walked on in silence for some time. I could tell that he was glancing at my face to see if I believed him; but I soon set him right on that point.

I said:

"Why do you say that to me? You know it isn't so."

I was not angry. In a way perhaps I had no just reason to be ferreting secrets from him. Besides, he did not know me; and it would have been indiscreet of him to talk freely of his personal affairs to any stranger who chanced, as I had, to get some slight claim to his gratitude. But I knew what he did not know: that is, that I could be trusted with his most shielded secrets. I am positively Jesuitical about many things.

A fine social state we would have, indeed, if each man reported to the police all that he knew to the discredit of his neighbors! In such a state I should confine myself so assiduously to reporting just one class of neighbors—the informers themselves; and report them for just one offense—that of informing.

Mr. Summers ignored my remark. It was the easiest way; for it was no time to be indignant because I suggested that he had not told the truth. He knew that he had not. He began to talk.

Digitized by Google

III

"I HAD to come ashore and remain late on account of business. My wife and Vivian didn't come with me. None of us are ever off the yacht at night if we can help it. Vivian, too, as you will probably learn quickly enough, Mr. Everhard, is also in danger. She doesn't believe so. That is, she thinks they have mistaken her for her sister, my wife you know.

"I kept off the streets as much as I could, so I took a room at the St. Francis and kept my appointment there. It was late when the business was finished. I ordered a taxi and started for the dock. I had, of course, looked at the driver before I got in. I know by sight some of the men that are after me. He appeared to be all right. Perhaps he was.

"I told him to drive rapidly to the dock. I am always more or less on the alert, but I was thinking of the business that had been taken up and for a moment was off my guard.

"Suddenly the door of the taxi was thrown open and the man you saw leaped in upon me. The machine had not stopped. Of course, if it had slowed down or stopped I would have been suspicious and on the lookout. But I was utterly surprised.

"He had me in his arms helpless almost before I knew he had come into the machine. I didn't even have time to draw the gun that I always carry. He took it from my pocket and flung it out of the door; then drew a long knife and told me to be quiet. I understood why he preferred a knife to a gun.

"Then he said something to the driver and the machine turned sharply at the next corner. A few minutes later the machine ran into something—telephone pole or hydrant I think. It gave us a terrific jolt. The man opened the door and peered out, cursing the driver.

"In an instant I was out of the other door and racing down the street. The driver had been thrown out of his seat and was either killed or knocked unconscious. I was glad of that. It meant I would have only one pursuer.

"The man was right after me. I knew I couldn't keep ahead of him for long, and I cried for help as loud as I could. I could hear him right behind me and every moment I expected to feel that knife sink into my back. It was awful.

"Then I saw you. I was never so glad to see anybody in my life. My feet seemed to grow lighter—but I was exhausted. I don't think I could have gone another half-block. It seemed to me that I had been running for hours.

"After you shot I must have fainted for I can't remember anything more. You must think me weak as a woman, Mr. Everhard?" he questioned apologetically.

"Why didn't that man try to kill you?" I asked, ignoring his last remark.

Mr. Summers looked at me in an effort to show amazement on his face, and said:

"Why, he did! You saw that, didn't you?"

"He never struck at you until he saw that you were escaping. He could have cut your throat in the taxi as easily as he took your gun away. And finally, when you were on the pavement unconscious he threw his knife at me—not at you."

"I don't understand that," he said.

"Neither do I," I answered pointedly.

IV

WE GOT a launch that took us out to the *Hesperus* which was anchored out in the bay.

As we approached we were hailed from the bridge; and we were met at the gangway by a sailor who wore a belt of cartridges and a heavy Colt. He saluted Mr. Summers like a man-o'-war's man and eyed me with bold scrutiny.

I began to have a little more respect for Mr. Summers's fears. I had already seen something of his dangers. He evidently thought it necessary to protect himself at every point with a quartermaster on the bridge and an armed sentry at the gangway. I began to be quite interested.

The *Hesperus* herself was enough to interest anybody. It was a magnificent yacht, and I shuddered to think of the expense. That huge funnel could take a lot of money up in smoke, and it is no small item to feed a double crew of men, much more to pay them. He explained later when I mentioned it, that he kept a larger crew than he needed because it gave a sense of security. The yacht was larger than any I had ever seen: a lean, white, sea beast of narrow beam and some two hundred feet in length.

Digitized by Google

There was something wofully ironical to me in the fact that a man who was able to own this floating palace was unable to enjoy a restful night.

We went below and he asked me to step into the saloon and wait a few moments while he went back up to his cabin.

I pushed aside the curtain and stepped into the spacious dim-lighted room; then noticed a woman dozing by a reading-lamp. I felt like an intruder and would have stepped right out again and waited for him in the passageway, but the face of the woman fascinated me.

An open book lay on her lap and her hands were folded on it. She was sitting in a low, deep, high-back chair. Her head was against the back of the chair so that her face was slightly upturned: a beautiful, but tired, pallid, sad face. I knew at once that she was Vivian's sister.

I was not aware that I made any sound. Perhaps our voices in the passageway had disturbed her; perhaps my mere presence made itself felt for she was obviously a woman of extreme sensitiveness; anyway, she opened her wide, dark eyes and looked at me.

The next instant she was on her feet, alarm in her face and her hands instinctively pressed against her throat as though to check a cry of fear. It was near three o'clock; a musical ship's clock in the room struck six bells even as she stood looking at me. It must have been terrifying for one who lived in constant dread to awaken and find a stranger but a few feet away.

My lips are not facile. I don't speak easily to women; but I was ready to tell her that there was no cause for fear when she asked in a low, strained voice:

"Who are you?"

I told her I had just come aboard with Mr. Summers—at his invitation.

"He is back then?"

She looked relieved; but I thought it was not as much because she heard Mr. Summers was safely on board as because she heard that I was a friend. She was still, it seemed, a bit distrustful of me, and asked where Mr. Summers was. I told her. She continued to stand.

"Nothing has happened to him?"

I assured her that he was all right; but thought it best that Mr. Summers himself tell of his experience—or rather not tell of it at all, and so spare her over-wrought nerves.

She asked if I was one of the men with whom Mr. Summers had had the business appointment, and showed surprise when I said that I was not.

Mr. Summers then came in. A whiff of his breath explained to me why he had gone to his stateroom.

"Why, Suzanne, I didn't know you were up. Mr. Everhard, my wife. I've had the devil's own time, Suzanne, and Mr. Everhard yanked me out of the morgue by my collar. He's too good a fellow for me to lose sight of, so I brought him along——"

"What was the matter? Tell me, Melville. Have they tried to kill you again? Oh my God! Tell me."

She looked imploringly from Mr. Summers to me. I shook my head slightly.

Mr. Summers, with a tenderness I didn't know whether to credit to affection or the whisky which seemed to have brightened his manner, put his arm around his wife and drew her close to him as he said:

"I had a close call, Suzanne. A big man jumped into the taxi on the way to the wharf. I jumped out and he came after me. Fortunately Mr. Everhard happened to appear and frightened him off. I'm keeping Mr. Everhard with me—as my mascot. Good beginning. He seems able to keep off danger."

Mrs. Summers plainly tried not to show that she thought her husband had not been discreet in taking up with a stranger who had inadvertently been of service. She thanked me, but not enthusiastically. Mr. Summers continued to talk of his adventure, but there was a certain lightness in his tone that contrasted strangely with my memory of his frantic screams.

I rather felt that Mrs. Summers got, and was eager to get, the impression that my service to her husband had consisted in appearing on the scene while her husband, unarmed, was battling desperately with a giant who wielded a knife not much smaller than a broadsword.

There was no doubt about her being a lovely woman, devoted to her husband. I felt sorry, not that he had minimized what little I did, but that he was not the man she thought.

I have a pronounced weakness for women—not in the way some people may readily think from that remark. Their tearless sadness more deeply influences me than

Digitized by Google

their coquettish smiles or tears; and I look at them as I do at men; into their faces, not at their clothes.

The psychology of a woman's love is, to my mind, best explained by the child's devotion to her doll: the thing of painted china and glued hair is but an object to which the small girl fastens her imagination. She forgets that it is a thing of glass, rope and sawdust, as a woman forgets that a man is of flesh and blood and bone and endows him with those ideals dearest to her nature.

Each woman likes to think her man is bold, courageous, honorable, unknown to fear and above weaknesses. Sometimes she learns most grievously that the man is not so sternly honorable or so much without fear as she thought and then—well, few women act the same when disappointed. Some mother the man with a love akin to pity, some seek and love another, some kill themselves, and some merely weep in the cloistered bedroom.

Mr. Summers talked with facility; he waved his hands expressively and was almost jocose. She smiled, and answered him softly.

When she had gone, and he had sent her an affectionate gesture as she turned back with a parting glance at the doorway, he suddenly seemed another man, and slumped with a sigh into a chair. He sat for some time silent, brooding. It was as though he had forgotten me, and I continued to stand.

Presently he looked up at me. A wry smile was on his face, and he said almost with sardonic humor:

"Mr. Everhard, I'm not drunk enough tonight to tell you what I would like to. But remember this, *I love her*. I'm not the man I ought to be. But I am a better man because of her. But if you know—yes, and some day you may—then you will be cynical and sneer. I sneer at myself. I'm a fool, I'm a coward, I'm a cad, I'm a drunk, I'd like to be a murderer.

"By God, some day I will be too! Drive three bushrangers like cattle for a hundred miles! I wish I had that nerve. I love her. Her sister hates me—yes, but because she loves Suzanne she doesn't show it. I was a fool to bring you here. You more than half despise me now. Tomorrow you'll hate me too.

"No, it's not whisky. I'm half crazy all the time. Don't mind what I say. I would talk this way to myself if you weren't around. I do most every night. She is a woman, a real, true woman. And because of me they are trying to kill her. To murder her. To murder her—and she never harmed a living thing in her life.

"You are right: they are not trying to kill me. It is her. They want to kidnap and frighten me. Wound me, perhaps, but not kill me. The wine was poisoned when I wasn't on board. The bomb was tied to the ship when I was in the hospital. The shots through the port-hole have all been at her. But they want to get Vivian, too.

"Oh, I talk too much. But my God, look what a horrible secret I have to nurse. I can't tell anybody. I'm foolish to talk to you. But you're too cold-blooded to have imagination; you'll simply put me down as drunk. I am—nearly. Not drunk enough. Oh, I get drunk, not to forget, not to have whisky courage, but so I can cheer her up—affect an ease and cheerfulness that is the furthest conceivable thing from me! Don't ask me any questions. I can't stand questions.

"Things will come to a crisis soon. I know I'm melodramatic. All life is melodramatic—some people merely don't talk about it. I must talk. I wish I were a Catholic—some day I'll make you my father confessor. Come on. It's late. I'll have Jensen show you to your stateroom. And tomorrow—tomorrow and tomorrow! Oh hell. Do you drink?"

I told him that I did not.

"No. I guess not. Might want to hit some more cigarets at five paces. You don't know what to make of me, do you? No. I'll tell you. I'm a fourflusher. I'm a fake. I'm an imposter. If they would only kill me I wouldn't care—but it's worse! Never love a woman, Mr. Everhard, never love a woman—unless you are an honorable man. No man should love a woman who can't look God squarely in the eye. You think I'm drunk, don't you?"

I said that I did. He laughed.

V

IT WAS dawn before I rolled over and forced myself into sleep. I lay awake wondering about Mr. Summers. I could not even begin to comprehend his variable personality. I had never

Digitized by Google

met any one anything like him. In a way I doubted everything that he had said, then doubted if it were discriminating that I should doubt. He said I was too cold-blooded to be imaginative. I suppose I am.

I am cold-blooded in the sense that I seldom become what is called "excited"; but my head is curiously restless, and when puzzled torments itself with conjectures and plausibilities, puts two and two together, deducts and compares, fumbles with facts and will not be quiet until it fastens upon something believable. Also, I am extremely suspicious; and, like most people, more inclined to believe the discreditable than the creditable.

So as I lay awake I pondered why there should exist in anybody the wish to kill such a woman as Mrs. Summers. Vivian had told me of her, and regretted that she herself was not more like Suzanne. That is, Vivian in her brief and rare repentant and graver moods had wished that she was trusting and idealistic like her sister, who was far from being the kind of woman that would commit such wrongs as needed the expiation of her death.

On the other hand, Vivian, who had a more striking beauty, a quick mind and a certain slowness and insolence of manner, was never at rest unless she had some man by the ears. She played sportively with the jealousies of men, and withal there was a curious lack of maliciousness in her. She was all the more perilous because she was not calculating, and seemed to give no thought to consequences. I had told her further that she seemed to give no thought to any man once she was sure he loved her. With characteristic impudence she had replied:

"Why should I? But I will tell you, Don, that I have to stay awake nights thinking about you."

That had been some five years before when we were both very, very young. No doubt she had learned much since then, for if experience be a teacher then it must be that Vivian grabbed knowledge with both hands. On the other hand, she had taught me much.

But I could not bring myself to believe that she in any way was responsible for the jeopardy of even herself, much less that of Mrs. Summers and her husband. She was like a child who would tear the wings from a butterfly to wear as ornaments, and then weep if any one pointed out to her that the butterfly suffered; so she could not very well be called cruel.

Violent attacks are not made against people gratuitously, and even desperate men must have strong reason for deliberately planning and doing murder; so that even if Vivian had thoughtlessly made jealous some lover, it was unthinkable that he would direct his attacks against any other than herself or the man whom he thought she favored.

Mr. Summers' suggestion of anarchists had a catchy plausibility. To blame mysterious violence on an anarchist is to explain it to the man-in-the-street, for anarchists are credited with a fascinating desperation and ubiquity that is much like the conception of devils among savage tribes.

If a savage in running through the forest falls over a vine, it is a devil that tripped him. If a disappointed office-seeker shoots at a President, he instantly becomes an anarchist in the headlines. If a millionaire is threatened by some obscure and evasive fellow whom he has bilked, the police readily explain their ineffectual efforts to catch him by referring to a gang of anarchists.

What was more, I knew as well as a man can know anything unprovable, that if Mr. Summers thought his enemies were anarchists he would have long ago carried his troubles to the police. I thought, also, that he left a great deal unsaid in pretending that he did not know by whom he was being attacked; and furthermore, he didn't seem by any means to have the kind of a character to defy blackmailers.

I believed that he would readily have paid almost any price for a feeling of security; and certainly a monthly tribute large enough to satisfy avaricious "anarchists," or whoever they were, would not have greatly exceeded the enormous expense of keeping the yacht at sea with two-score men for guards. There was, I believed, something complicated and shadowy in the background, and Mr. Summers knew just about what it was.

He had said that the attacks began about two years before, which would make it about the time of, or shortly after, his marriage. The Summerses had had a lot of publicity, and I was familiar with much of it. The press can make a sensation when people of wealth merely wiggle their fingers.

Digitized by Google

It was shortly after the marriage that Mrs. Summers's uncle had been killed in an automobile accident and left to her an incredibly large estate. This uncle was known to have been well-off, but it was a great surprise to find that he was many times a millionaire.

THIS uncle, Robert Rublee, had been devoted to his nieces, but Suzanne was the favorite and he was at no pains to conceal the fact. Perhaps he did not understand Vivian—or it is possible that he did thoroughly understand her. She was as unlike Suzanne as a skylark is unlike a canary, and there had been no holding her in cage or convent. The newspapers had seen fit to make a feature of the Rublee will, which left a greater fortune than any one had supposed existed, to Suzanne.

It was a much greater fortune than any one had anticipated, amounting to millions instead of tens of thousands; and I distinctly recalled reading a story in which some journalist had been at the labor of computing how much the "lucky" Mr. and Mrs. Summers could spend each hour of the day and night without exhausting the income.

Vivian, I also remembered, had been left to depend entirely upon the bounty of her sister; but I had known that this would not be so distasteful to Vivian as people who knew her not so well as I might expect. She loved Suzanne. In more sober and sincere moments, Vivian had told me that she wished that she were more like Suzanne—which was about the same as a flash of lightning wishing that it was like a grate fire.

I could not keep from wondering what Vivian would do when she discovered that I was on the yacht. She could do anything from jumping overboard to pretending not to have met me before and it would be characteristic of her. I didn't expect that she would do either. I could not believe that for five years she had remembered me as I had remembered her.

I thought that in so long a time she would have had several men in love with her, and unless she had changed her nature, there would now be some man who thought she was in love with him. I may not now know much about women in general, but even then I knew her.

I teased the tangled skein of thought until it was almost daylight; but as I never worry, I had no difficulty in going to sleep when I decided to do so. There is a strain of fatalism in my blood that leaves me free from distressing myself about the morrow, no matter what complications are in the gin of today; so my sleep is dreamless, though it is perhaps abnormally light.

I was awakened less than an hour after I had closed my eyes. I awoke to see my door gently closing. Some one had been peering in. At first I thought it might have been some servant, unaware that the stateroom had received a guest, who came in by accident and perceiving me, quietly withdrew. But Jensen would hardly have neglected to notify the servants that the stateroom was occupied.

An instinctive suspicion of all things that are not clear has kept me out and has pulled me out of many unpleasant situations; though I admit readily enough that I have often stumbled into a mare's nest.

I was out of the bed and had my head poked out of the door as soon as any man could have done so.

"You! What do you want?" I called at the form retreating down the passageway.

A young man in a trim, square-cut, navy-blue serge suit, much like the uniform worn by petty officers on a man-o'-war, turned and faced me.

"I beg your pardon, sir," he said, "I didn't know the stateroom was occupied."

He was polite; but he certainly lacked the humbleness of the servant though he seemed trying to show it.

"What did you want?" I insisted.

"I am the steward," he said, as though he expected that would fully explain.

But it explained nothing to me.

"What did you want, Steward?" I repeated.

"Nothing, sir."

"Why then did you open my door?" I asked.

"Why—that is—I wanted to make sure the ports were closed."

He was not quite so much at his ease.

"This time of morning, with a ship at anchor in the bay?" I asked coldly.

"Mr. Summers is very particular about having the ports closed, sir."

There seemed no need for me to press him further. I was convinced that he was lying and he knew it.

Digitized by Google

He was about thirty, with a clean smooth-shaven, striking face, with blue eyes; and he seemed anything but a man fitted for such service. I thought there was something like a poetical or idealistic touch to his face. He appeared to be anything but the usual well-fed steward. His voice, too, was cultured; and those blue eyes were lighted with intelligence.

"Remember this, Steward," I said pointedly. "I don't like to be disturbed—particularly about port-holes while the ship is at anchor. And in the future, if you have any occasion to enter my room, please knock—and knock very softly. I'll hear it, even if I am asleep."

"Yes, sir," he said.

I closed the door and went back to bed.

VI

IT WAS after nine o'clock when I appeared on deck; but no one was in sight except a solitary figure that paced back and forth across the bridge in front of the charthouse.

As I did not have rubber soles on my shoes, I did not walk up and down the deck lest I disturb some late sleeper, but I stood leaning over the rail and watching the ferries shuttling and splashing across the bay.

Presently a cabin door opened back of me. I turned quickly, expecting, or rather hoping, to see Vivian. But it was Mr. Summers.

As he greeted me I could tell that he was depressed. I did not think he was nearly so handsome in the daylight. Lines were in his face and the skin had an unhealthy appearance. There was much about him that I did not like, and yet I was surprised by the way he began to talk to me.

He said that he thought it hardly fair to ask me to stay with him and place myself in danger. I had not expected that he would ever have such generous thoughts.

"You will be a marked man from this day," he said.

I had been a "marked man" once or twice before, and had not found it fatal. I did not tell him that, but took occasion to ask again if he would not tell me all that he could about the source of his dangers. He shook his head, and replied:

"You wouldn't believe me if I told you the truth—or you wouldn't want to stay on if you did believe me. I am in this trouble because I am doing what is right. I know that, Mr. Everhard. If I were an out-and-out scoundrel I would not be in this mess.

"I have been thinking hard since last night, or rather this morning, after you left me. I haven't run away and hidden so much because I am afraid of those men as because—well maybe we shall speak of that some other time. Or maybe we won't. Perhaps you can guess."

He looked at me as though trying to see if I had guessed, or if I thought I had guessed, what he meant. I was quite sure that he wanted me to think that he had run and hid, as he said, because of his wife—because he loved her. It is human nature, perhaps, for men to wish to ascribe as honorable motives as possible to actions of which they are ashamed. But I said nothing, and I have been told that my face seldom shows what I am thinking.

I suppose that I was born with the gambler's face. I had also discovered at that time that an effective way to get other people to talk was to keep silent; though if occasion warrants insistence on my part, I try to make that insistence direct, perhaps at times a little menacing.

As I said nothing, Mr. Summers went on:

"You said one thing last night that impressed me very much; that was, that you didn't bother about the law if you knew that you were doing right, Mr. Everhard"—he lowered his voice earnestly—"I don't dare bring the law into this. I can't tell you why. I want your help, but I don't like to ask for it unless you let me pay you. Money is all I have to give. Name your own price. I shall feel better for it if you do. But even then, you must not ask me personal questions."

I told him in just so many words that I could not blindly promise to undertake any course of action at any time; and particularly not this time as there seemed to be much more reason to distrust him than there was for trusting him.

For a moment anger burned in his face; but that did not trouble me. I did not tell him that I had come aboard the *Hesperus* not so much to save him from his dangers as because they were also the dangers of Vivian. I did not mention her name. Moreover, and I did not tell him this either, I have always consistently refused to accept a "fee" for my services whenever I,

Digitized by Google

by chance or design, was of assistance to any one.

I dislike the idea of allowing any one to have the right to tell me to do anything. My ethics are queer, perhaps. I am not scrupulous about certain matters, but I can not endure to feel that anybody can hire me. It is rather a precarious code of honor for one to have who lives by his wits; but I have it anyway.

I try to do at all times what I think is right; but now in my elder years I can see quite plainly that though I was very sincere and earnest in my younger days, I was also a bit lawless. I can now see that it would be a very bad thing for Society if each person followed his own code of justice and gave no heed to the general code which Society has adopted as law.

He got over his flush of anger gracefully by saying that I was "a hard one to understand." I offered this proposition:

"I will stay with you on the agreement that I can do what I think is right in each emergency that comes up. The only promise I make is that I will not turn to the police without your permission. I don't mind promising that because I never trouble the police much anyway.

"And as for naming my price—we can discuss that later, and it need not be mentioned again until I bring it up myself. But don't think that I have no respect for the law. Law is an agreement among the people of a state to do certain things and to do them in a certain way. A man's mere presence in the state presupposes that he has accepted that agreement."

I thought it would be just as well to let him know how I felt about law for he seemed to think I was willing to be a crook if induced. A lot of people have no respect for the law, but keep it to the letter out of fear of the police. I don't always—even now—obey it to the letter; but my respect for the law is something more than the intimidation of the police.

"You are a hard one to understand," he repeated, then said that he would take me up on my proposition. "I am doing something," he added, "that I have not done for years. I am trusting a man!"

He said it with a little dramatic air that left me in doubt as to whether he was really a bit moved by this new faith of his in a fellow man, or whether he was trying to flatter me. All the respect that Mr. Summers got from me for himself was hard won and grudgingly given.

Perhaps I mistrusted him at all points too much; perhaps the man did have a streak of honor in him that I was reluctant to recognize as such; perhaps for the moment he had been sincere in hesitating to draw me into his dangers without feeling that he was to be allowed to reward me with money—money was all that he had to offer. He seemed to realize that I didn't care for his friendship; and moreover he had been accustomed to hiring whomever he wanted. Money was his sole means of barter.

As he started to leave me I said:

"Who is your steward? I caught a glimpse of him this morning. He appears to be above the average."

"He is. Westerman's his name. Vivian—Mrs. Summers's sister found him. After the wine was found poisoned we got rid of the other steward though he really acted innocent. Vivian remembered this steward, Westerman, on the boat in which she came back from England after her uncle's death. So she set about getting him. He's in love with her—as most men are who come near her."

Mr. Summers said it contemptuously.

"Yes?" I asked.

"You'll meet her soon enough. My sister-in-law and I do not get along very well, Mr. Everhard. And she will talk very freely to you—she does to every one."

With that, he left me.

VII

I HEARD Vivian's voice on the other side of the deck-house. She was singing, and I thought the lilting, careless notes rather incongruous on a ship where there were at least two faces haggard from the effects of fear. Whether she sang from thoughtlessness or courage, I was not sure. I knew that she was no coward; but I knew also that she loved life dearly.

I stood so my back was turned toward her as she came around aft of the deck-house. She lowered her voice, but continued to hum, when she saw me.

Then I turned around.

For a moment it appeared as though she had seen a ghost materialize before her eyes; then she said in surprised, soft, hushed voice: "My God!" and leaned against the deck-house, and stared at me.

Digitized by Google

"Don!" she gasped, as though not yet sure that it was I.

"Yes, Vivian," I answered.

"You! How on earth did you get here?"

"I came aboard with Mr. Summers this morning," I said.

"Suzanne said you were Mr. Ever—Oh, I see! You took that name because you knew I was here."

"No, Vivian. I took that name five years ago—when you gave it to me."

"Don't let them know that I know you. I told Suzanne everything and she doesn't understand. Of course she told Melville. Oh, but I am glad to see you! Don, Don," she said softly, coming closer and putting her hands against me.

I don't know what she would have said or done if I had not stepped back and pushed her hands away. I pushed them away gently—but she understood what I meant.

"Oh, Don," she said bitterly, "you still have that chunk of ice for a heart!"

"Did you," I asked, "tell Suzanne everything—everything?"

She shook her head quickly and looked at me with widened eyes as much as to say that I knew very well that she had not done that.

"Of course not," I agreed. "You need not be afraid. I won't tell anybody anything. And my heart is not quite so hard as you think, Vivian. I came aboard the *Hesperus* only because I knew you were here and I heard—well, I heard of the bomb and poisoned wine and shots."

"Oh, that has been horrible, Don! And no one knows what the trouble is."

Vivian was slim, trim, dark and very beautiful—at least in my eyes. I suppose that there are people who would write her down as a wicked woman and claim that she showed her character in the deep, brown, provocative eyes that had in them the strongest lure I have ever seen within the eyes of any woman. Something of the girlish freshness had gone from her face in five years, leaving her with a faint suggestion of weariness—a suggestion that her manner and voice belied.

The trouble with Vivian all of her life was that she was fascinating—and knew it. She held men to heel for the sheer joy of captivating them. As are most women, if they have been given the chance to make men love them, Vivian was a remarkable actress; she could appear innocent and timid easily; she could simulate astonishment or interest; she could make a man who did not know her well think almost anything she wanted him to think and she could do it without saying a word, or at most not more than one or two words.

I suppose during the French Revolution there were women who, as they rode with bound hands in the jolting cart to the guillotine, made eyes at the men along the way. But perhaps there is nothing so very incongruous in that; the instinct to attract is primordial, and dangers and death are mere incidents of life.

Life itself is grounded on the lure of sex. It has been many, many years since I have believed that men are so reckless as women. Men are infinitely more discreet, and if to them comes the greater share of the world's dangerous adventures, it is probably because they have a less sensitive dramatic sense.

A woman gets much the same excitement from the game of fascinating the man she marks as malekind does in the clash of physical dangers. Many men don't think life is worth while unless they are continually risking their necks. Many women don't think life is worth while unless they are in love; or, to put it more accurately, unless there are men in love with them.

I would be greatly misrepresenting Vivian if I conveyed the impression that she ever, at any time, had thrown herself at my head. Not so. She had tantalized me to the point of distraction—but that had been because she knew that I loved her.

I never thought of her as wicked, as bad, as in the slightest degree evil. She was irresponsible. She seemed to have no more conception of the troubles into which any action of hers would get her than a child; in fact, she played with her fascinating beauty as a child might play with a deadly explosive.

"Don," she said, coming close and whispering while her dark eyes stared into my face, "you do still love me, then, don't you? You came when you heard I was in danger. I am glad for the dangers! You do—don't you? Don't you, Don?"

"And what if I did?" I asked, stepping back.

"I would be very happy," she said softly.

The next question I asked was not through jealousy. It was asked deliberately to surprise her; and I asked it in a way

Digitized by Google

to make her presume that I knew more than I did. Moreover I knew Vivian. I had put in a good part of five years conning the lessons she had taught me. When I asked, trying to make her think I knew more than I did: "What about Westerman?" Vivian, for an instant was caught in surprise, and left breathless.

Then she exclaimed as though she were almost offended—as though she would have felt very much offended if anybody but I had asked such a thing, she said:

"Why, he's the steward!"

"I know it. That is why I asked. He seems a most unusual steward."

"Do you know him?" she asked doubtfully.

"By sight," I said, half shutting my eyes and looking at her intently as though there were much more that I might tell.

"Tell me, Don! Do you know who he is? Do you?"

I had known Vivian well enough to make her betray herself.

"Ah, Vivian," I said, "you are not half the actress you used to be. There was once a time when you could find out everything I knew and never ask a question—and never tell a thing yourself."

"Oh, that's mean of you," she retorted.

"Yes? But tell me what you know about him."

"I will not," she answered flatly, trying to pout.

"Very well then. I shall ask him who he is."

"You wouldn't dare!" she exclaimed in alarm, then added hastily, "yes, you would, too. But don't do it, Don. Please don't. For my sake don't."

"Vivian," I said seriously, "I am not going to ask you if you love me—I don't want the Recording Angel to check any more black marks against you for such replies as you would make. But I am going to ask what do you think would have happened if Westerman had heard you ask me if I loved you?"

She hesitated a moment, then answered roguishly, with a laugh:

"Oh, you'd have probably told him we wanted a 'pot of coffee.' "

THE "pot of coffee" referred to one of the more or less dramatic incidents that had occurred some five years before. One evening Vivian was piqued because I would not do something or other, and she had threatened that if I did not do what she wanted that she would go to dinner with a disreputable rounder who had been trying to press himself on her for some time. It was entirely disparaging for any woman's reputation if she were seen with him.

I had told Vivian that if she did anything of the kind and I knew of it, I would come after her and take her out of the dining-room and do it before the nose of everybody present. She did it; and she impudently telephoned me when she arrived that she was there and that the dinner was being ordered. A half-hour later I was there myself. I was not in evening dress and the doorman politely informed me of the fact; but that did him no good. I didn't make a scene or anything of the kind. I simply went in, found where she was sitting at the table with the fellow, walked over to her and told her that it was time to leave.

For a moment she looked expectantly at the fellow's face. He wanted to know what the devil I meant, and I told him, but I spoke low enough not to cause any excitement among those at tables near by. He said that he would have me thrown out, and called a waiter avowedly for that purpose. When the waiter came bustling up, I said to him—

"This gentleman wishes a pot of coffee—at once."

And the "gentleman" did not correct the order. Then Vivian without a word of protest left the dining-room with me. Incidentally, she was reasonable for almost a week.

"Vivian," I said earnestly, "who is Westerman? Now tell me without any evasions. You know that I won't make any kind of trouble for you—no matter who he is or what he is to you."

"He means nothing to me," she said easily.

"But who is he?"

"Oh, he's just a romantic youngster who thinks he is in love with me. I can't help that, can I?"

"Oh, of course not," I said. "But who is he? If you don't tell me I shall leave you and go straight and ask him. He will tell me, too."

"No, no, Don, don't. Why do you always want to do things like that? I thought you would have learned some manners by this time! You always were doing

Digitized by Google

things like that. Listen, I'll tell you honestly about him. He bothered the life out of me for two years—writing long letters and crossing the country or an ocean just to see me. After this dreadful trouble started and I came to live on the yacht to be with Suzanne—for really then I wasn't afraid for myself—I wrote him about it—the trouble you know. Oh, and right away quick he wanted to come and play knight errant and protect me and all that nonsense——"

"Just like myself," I interrupted.

"No, he's not like you at all. A fine time I would ever have had getting you to pose as a steward just to be near me. He kept on insisting, and got more and more insistent and threatened to do all manner of things—like coming aboard willy-nilly and telling Melville who he was and what he wanted to do.

"Imagine! Melville would have exploded. He's dreadfully afraid of strangers in any guise. I don't see how he ever took a fancy to you. The gods ordered it, I guess. Anyway, Claude became so insistent, said he would come aboard as a deck-hand, as anything just to be near me—why are men so foolish?—that when we found the wine poisoned and got rid of the other steward, just as much for a joke as for anything else—only I was terribly lonesome on this old boat—I got Suzanne and Melville to let me hire the next steward.

"Of course, I had to lie about who he was and all that. But you know, Don, it is very seldom that I ever do anything like that. Claude has been here now almost six months and he is terribly disappointed in himself as a sleuth.

"It is the most mysterious thing you ever heard of—the way we are attacked. Nobody has the faintest inkling why.

"But honestly, Don, Claude Westerman means nothing to me. I've told him he is a 'dear'—and he is. But that's nothing."

"Who is he?" I insisted.

"Why, I told you! He is simply Claude Westerman. He didn't change his name, because his people know he is on the *Hesperus* and think that he is a guest. They would wilt from humiliation if they knew their only and most precious son was a steward. But I couldn't ask him to come as a guest—besides that wouldn't have been nearly so interesting. Would it?"

"I suppose not."

"You 'suppose not,' " she retorted scornfully. "Of course I don't treat him like a steward. But he's a dreadfully intense young man. Not a bit like you, Don. Here he comes now to tell us breakfast is ready. Be nice to him, Don."

Westerman, though he spoke to Vivian, could not keep his eyes off me. I had no difficulty in understanding that he was quite ready to dislike me. For that I could not blame him in the least. Our first meeting had not been entirely agreeable; and our second perhaps annoyed him more than the first, for he had seen that Vivian talked to me as though we were old friends—which, of course, he could not understand.

On the other hand, he had my sympathy. Yes, and perhaps a bit of my admiration. I didn't think that he was more than twenty-three or four. The quixotic gallantries of youth are precious things, though the elders of the world are inclined to make sport of them; but it is significant that the elders in their dotage, as they muse before the fire on long Winter evenings, recall most fondly those memories of their impulsive, younger days of which they would be somewhat abashed to speak the truth.

Westerman, I thought, was laying up a very precious memory of which he would never speak to his children, or grandchildren. I have a weakness anyway for people who follow their impulses, who do the brave foolish things of this world—though I, myself, am perhaps cold; and what so-called reckless things I do are done calculatingly.

Had I followed my impulse, I would have ordered up a launch, bundled Vivian into it and carried her off—and mysterious parties that cared to shoot at her in the future would have had to take the chance of being shot at in return; but it was the uncertainty of what she would do with me afterward that checked the impulse.

As Westerman started away she said:

"Oh, Steward. This is Mr.—Mr. Everhard who will be our guest for some time."

Westerman nodded acknowledgment.

I put out my hand. He looked almost startled at this unusual amenity, and took my hand very cautiously.

When he had gone, Vivian turned on me:

"Why did you do that? Now you have given everything away. He knows that you know who he is."

"He does not," I said. "He merely thinks that I never met a steward before."

Digitized by Google

"You know better than that," she answered. "Why did you do it?"

"Figure it out for yourself. He hasn't the servant's attitude toward guests. He was surprised, but not contemptuous. And he is probably the only man on the ship that I could depend on in a pinch."

"So you have Melville's number already," she said. "I'll tell you about him the first chance I get."

VIII

THE breakfast was a dreary affair. No one talked. Mr. Summers was depressed and his wife appeared ill as well as sad. Vivian tried to be politely formal to me; but mine is not a ready tongue when there is nothing in particular to talk about, so the conversation amounted to nothing.

I told Mr. Summers that I wished to go to the city and get a few things out of my room. He said that the steward went over each day at noon for the mail, papers and to order what supplies were needed; and that I could go with him—or before or after— as I preferred.

I went ashore with the steward. I took a taxi in front of the ferry and rode to my apartment. I had not been in the apartment more than fifteen minutes before the telephone rang, and when I answered a voice asked:

"Is this Everhard?"

I said that I was. Then:

"Everhard, you may think you are a hard guy and all that, but you better stay away from that blankety blank Summers or you'll get yours, and get it quick. Get me?"

I said that I did not quite understand.

"You came off Summers's yacht didn't you? Well, are you going back?"

I said that I expected to—unless somebody made it worth my while not to do so.

"Whatchu mean by that?" the voice asked interestedly.

"Just that," I replied.

"Summers's hired you to protect him, ain't he?"

"You're on the right track," I said. "Keep going—only leave out names over the phone if you want to talk business to me. And I am always open to a business proposition."

"Say," the man began, then added, "look here," and paused for some time. Presently he began again: "We didn't count on this, but do you mean you're ready to talk business with us?"

"I am ready to talk business with anybody," I answered, "if he can make it interesting."

"I get you. I get you. But, say, are you the fellow that shot Black Jeff last night?"

"I don't know Black Jeff. But if he is the gentleman that threw a knife at me last night, I would guess that I am the fellow who shot him."

"But listen here, Everhard——"

"Drop that name," I cut in. "You don't know who is on the wire."

"I get you. But listen. We didn't know who you was till you come ashore. But I've heard of you. But I ain't got no authority to make any deal. I was just to spot you and warn you off—to let you know that you'd get yours if you tied up with that Summers outfit.

"I followed you from the Ferry building, saw you go into your apartment, got your name from the telephone operator and beat it for a public phone. I'm just telling you all this, Eve— I mean I'm just telling you all this so you'll know we ain't asleep, see? Well, now let's get this down in plain language. Are you ready to kick in with us?"

"I wouldn't be wasting my time holding this receiver if I didn't intend that you should understand that," I answered.

"How do we know you won't give us the double-cross?"

"How do I know that you won't give me the double-cross?" I answered.

That caused him to hesitate.

"Well, you don't," he admitted slowly, "but neither do we."

"In that case," I said, "I might as well stick to Summers. But you look up my record carefully—as much of it as you can find—and you fellows decide whether you think it is easier to kill me off than to buy me off. And if you ever decide that I might possibly be of some help to you and are willing to take a chance at trusting me, just stick a little personal to 'E' in the *Chronicle*.

"Then keep your eye on the boat and watch when I come ashore. I am ready to take a chance with you fellows—but remember, my services come high. You fellows are after money, aren't you? Well, so am I."

I said, "You fellows are after money,

Digitized by Google

aren't you?" as though it were a well-known and obvious fact. He had grunted an assent.

"How much did Summers tell you?" he asked.

"He told me enough," I answered, jumping desperately at the chance of making an accurate guess, "to understand why Black Jeff tried to kidnap him instead of murder him."

"Black Jeff says he'll get you," the man answered, apparently missing the point to my statement. "His shoulder bone's smashed—just above the heart."

I said nothing. I had my own ideas about what the result would be if the party called Black Jeff tried to carry out any such threats; but it did not seem necessary to speak of them.

"Black Jeff says he'll get you," the man repeated.

"I heard you say that before."

"Well? He'll do it too. Jeff's that kind. He says he'll cut your heart out and stuff it down your throat."

That was indeed quite a formidable threat for any one to hear if he has delicate nerves. The man on the other end of the wire had obviously been charged with the mission of terrifying me, and this probably was more to his liking, and a work in which he had more practise, than that of considering such a proposition as I had offered.

I was really anxious to get in touch with him and his fellows. The telephone message had offered an unexpected opening, and I was doing what I could to make the most of it. I realized that I was practically putting myself in their hands by being willing to make an appointment—but I was sure that some one of them must be the leader and a cunning enough leader to see that I could be of more use to him as a guest on the *Hesperus* than as a prisoner or corpse in some remote cellar.

They had no more reason than their instinctive suspicions would offer to be afraid to trust me. They knew, or at least could find out easily, that I was a foot-loose man who had been in and out of trouble without ever having called upon the police. That in itself would be a high recommendation in the eyes of crooks.

They probably knew also, if they had watched Summers so closely in the past as they seemed to have done, that my meeting with him was accidental; and they probably could not think of any other reason than the money he would pay me to explain why I had been willing to become his companion. So what would be more natural than, if they paid me well, that I would join with them and use Summers's confidence in me to further their own plans?

So again I ignored the threat of the party called Black Jeff, and I said decisively to the fellow at the other end of the telephone:

"I haven't any more time to listen to you. You can take my proposition to the person from whom you get your orders—and if he wants to see me, he can put the personal in the *Chronicle*."

With that said, I put up the receiver. Then I turned to the table and continued to oil the two heavy automatics. I had had only one with me the night before and had come ashore for nothing more than to get the other. Not from modesty, but because I don't want any one to think I am a liar, I hesitate to say how accurately I could shoot at that time.

Many people can hit a coin tossed in the air a few feet from them; but I have stuck a match in the ground and while standing ten feet away, I have drawn and fired in five seconds and lighted the match without breaking it. I don't pretend to have done this every time—but I never failed to put out the match with the second shot. If the bullet went within a half-inch of the flame it would be extinguished.

IX

DINNER that evening aboard the *Hesperus* was more lively but more depressing than the breakfast had been. Mr. Summers was almost drunk. He talked at length and fluently, and I tried to listen attentively as though I had not perceived that there was alcohol behind his tongue. Vivian ignored him, and Mrs. Summers appeared not to know whether she should be appreciative toward me because I ignored his intoxication, or whether to be thankful because I did not realize that he had been drinking.

I was extremely sorry for her. She was a lovely woman, and I could not understand how she could tolerate a man like Summers, much less care for him.

"I don't know whether I have told you before, Mr. Everhard—I really can't

Digitized by Google

remember what I say or what I neglect to say —but we are grateful to you for——"

"Now, Suzanne," Mr. Summers interrupted, "Mr. Everhard knows we're grateful and all that, I've told him. We are glad to see anybody. Would be glad to see a dog come aboard. Life's a dull proposition after all aboard this craft. Isn't it, Vivian? What? Sulking again, eh? Vivian's either like champagne or stale beer, Mr. Everhard. Why don't you try the wine? Vintage of '86. Best in the world. Make him drink a toast with you, Suzanne."

"If Mr. Everhard doesn't care for it, I certainly would not urge him to take it," Mrs. Summers answered.

"Of course he cares for it. No. No, he doesn't." He began to laugh. "No. He might want to shoot some more cigaret butts!"

At that pun he laughed boisterously, and the two women looked at him in surprise; Vivian, contemptuously but a little curiously; Mrs. Summers, wonderingly.

I was not entirely at ease while Mr. Summers tried to explain what he meant and to repeat what the sailor had told him that morning about my experience in Australia.

"I don't see anything amusing about that, I think it was a dreadful experience," Mrs. Summers said, looking sympathetically at me.

"Bully, bully time!" Mr. Summers declared. "Like to go through it myself."

"Yes, you would!" Vivian said under her breath, but not seeming to care whether or not she was heard.

"But Mr. Everhard," Mrs. Summers said, "you don't enjoy that sort of thing do you?"

I had not said anything about enjoying or not enjoying it. I told her it was not so much a case of enjoying as it was of making the best of it when one got into a scrape. As some French writer has said in a book I chanced across: "All of a man's claims to modesty are vain when he puts his name to the printed page." So I shall not pretend to be modest about what I have done. I can write about myself with ease, more, perhaps with some egotism; but I can not talk about myself, particularly to a woman, without feeling embarrassed.

But she wanted to know what other "scrapes," as I had called them, I had been into. I assured her that nothing else had been any way near so dramatic as that one. At that I felt the sharp point of a slipper against my shin—but Vivian was looking innocently, abstractedly, at the ceiling.

"Can't you tell, Suzanne, that Mr. Everhard is modest," Vivian said, when her slipper could no longer reach the leg I had withdrawn, "and even a bit shy. Look at him now. He's positively blushing!"

Of course her sister was amazed at Vivian's familiarity and impudence; and Mr. Summers, used as he was to her audacity, was much surprised.

"Vivian!" Mrs. Summers protested.

People have very seldom taken the liberty of teasing me—or of trying to. It is not that I am formidable, or frighten them, but I seem to impress them as a rather serious-minded person, which I am not. But Mrs. Summers did not know that as well as Vivian, who then proceeded to scandalize and shock her sister and to alarm Mr. Summers by insisting that I should relate my affairs of the heart.

I am afraid that I did actually blush then.

"You must not pay attention to her!" Mrs. Summers said earnestly, and I thanked her for coming to my rescue; but it was all that I could do to keep from laughing.

" 'Affairs of the heart!' That's Vivian's hobby. Get her to tell you about hers, Mr. Everhard. Why, if she can't find anybody else to flirt with she will flirt with the steward!" Mr. Summers said, and he said it meaningly.

Mrs. Summers winced at his wretched remark; but I tried, as well as I could, to pretend that I had not heard it, and was busily engaged beneath the table in dodging Vivian's slipper, and above the table in trying to get the last bit of meat from a steak bone.

"Do you play cards?" Mrs. Summers asked, obviously trying to lead the conversation off the unpleasant subject.

"Does he play cards!" Vivian exclaimed thoughtlessly.

"How do you know?" Mr. Summers demanded aggressively.

"How do I know?" she repeated. "Well, did you ever know of a man who went wandering around the world and couldn't play cards? Absurd. Might as well ask a society lady if she plays cards!"

Thus it was that Vivian tried to conceal the fact that many, many times I had entertained her with manipulations and tricks at cards.

Digitized by Google

I HOPE that I may be pardoned if I seem to boast of my accomplishments—they are very limited in number, but I had studied to develop each as a musician studies for technique, as an artist studies for unerring effects, as men with more laudable ambition than my own study and practise and perfect themselves with the violin and with the brush, I can, and could then, shoot quick and straight as I have already said; and I was then able to do almost anything with cards that nimble, dexterous fingers could possibly do.

For me to admit that I cheated on occasion, without taking the time to explain fully the occasion, is perhaps to convey the wrong impression. I can shoot as well as any man I have ever met, and I have shot one or two men—but I believe that any one who knew fully the circumstances would say that they deserved to be shot. The same with my cheating at cards—for the most part I have cheated crooks. But I wanted to be able to handle the cards at any time and at any place with a degree of skill and accuracy no less than that with which I could handle a gun.

It took constant practise to do so. But very early in life I saw that the gambling table was a vortex that irresistibly drew men into the game; and that sometimes the shuffling cards and clicking chips recorded tragedies more poignant, even though less bloody, than those enacted at the smoking muzzle of a revolver. The most dramatic moments of my life have not been those that were the most perilous, but those in which I stared across the green cloth into the eyes of some hard-faced man that played his cards desperately—and some of those moments have been perilous, too.

Vivian knew that I was dexterous with cards. I used to baffle her with tricks; so it was really amusing to have her ask me:

"You *do* play cards, don't you, Mr. Everhard?"

I nodded; then she turned to Mr. Summers:

"See. I knew he did. Use your head, Melville. Use your head, and you wouldn't have to ask so many questions."

"We can't all be brilliant," he said crossly, and changing the subject went rambling along to tell vaguely of exciting experiences he, too, had had.

I was inclined to think they were largely fanciful, or at least highly colored. He told of how a friend of his had been blackmailed, and of how he had helped the friend to detect and expose the blackmailers; there had been some gun-play, too. His attitude was such as to say to me: you are not the only one who has been into dangers and conducted himself well.

"Why, Melville," Mrs. Summers said in mild surprise, "you never told me of that before."

"Oh, there's lots of things I haven't told you, my dear," and he reached out and patted her shoulder affectionately.

"No doubt!" Vivian said impersonally jabbing at her orange ice.

"Yes," he said in an unpleasant tone to her, "and no doubt there are lots of things you haven't told Suzanne."

"Indeed there are," she answered easily, "but I never pretended to tell her everything. I didn't go to New York to succeed in business as you did. I went to have a good time. And I had it."

I had incautiously put my leg in front of my chair and she punctuated the last sentence on my shin.

"One might judge from that that you were——"

Vivian interrupted him by saying that she had been just whatever she wanted to be, and that any one could "judge" whatever they pleased.

And while they were talking, Mrs. Summers engaged my attention, obviously to keep it from the antagonism in their manner, and asked if I played cribbage, and if I would care for a game with her after dinner; and that neither Melville nor Vivian cared for the game.

Mr. Summers began again to talk of himself and instances of his courage. It was very unpleasant. I do not think that even Mrs. Summers believed him, and all the time he was talking he continued to drink.

I thought perhaps it was significant that he talked so much of blackmailers, and of how he had assisted in exposing and punishing them; for some reason or other blackmailers were on his mind. But I could not believe that his fear of Black Jeff, and Black Jeff's associates, whoever they were, was due to their being blackmailers. I was confident that if they were and wanted money from him, that Mr. Summers would readily pay it. I was quite sure that he would pay any sum of money

Digitized by Google

for his peace. But I did not understand why he talked so much of blackmailers.

When dinner was over and he got up from the table, having finished a wild story, he stood a bit unsteadily and held on to the back of his chair; then he said through a kind of snickering laugh to me—

"You think I'm a great liar, don't you? I am—maybe. But I've entertained you—all of you. And the truth—who knows about truth?"

With that he walked slowly away, carefully pretending that his legs were steady, but holding out his hand to touch for support whatever came within reach; and as he went he laughed to himself as though enjoying a rare joke.

Vivian looked reprovingly, accusingly across the table at her sister who sat with her head bowed.

"How much longer," Vivian asked harshly, "will you put up with that?"

"Vivian," Mrs. Summers said glancing at me, "you forget yourself."

"I've done nothing of the kind. If there is any one person on earth before whom I can talk frankly, it is before Don, here. Suzanne, this is the Donald of whom I have told you. I gave him the name Everhard when we parted, and he has kept it. He is a man, Suzanne, and I didn't tell you the truth when I said that I sent him away because I could not trust him—because he was a gambler. I didn't expect to tell you who he was when I found he was on the *Hesperus* because then I would have to tell the whole truth. And I am not proud of it.

"He left me because—no, you need not look at me that way, Don, I want Suzanne to know. You still don't trust me—but Suzanne does. I want her to trust you, too. She was afraid of you. She thought you might have inveigled her precious Melville into bringing you aboard. She was afraid you had worked on his generosity—a mythical quality in that gentleman, let me assure you. Suzanne, you know you do not love that man; you merely think that you ought to!"

Mrs. Summers had been looking with an expression of alarm and curiosity at me. Though I have been told that in the stress of hard playing at the gambling table my face reflects no emotion whatever, yet I am quite sure that my face was a burning red from the moment Vivian began talking of me; and I was very much embarrassed.

I wanted to run from the room and leave the two women to talk over privately the intimate matters, and I would probably have got out on some pretext or other—perhaps without any pretext—if Mrs. Summers had not left. When Vivian told her that she merely thought she ought to love Summers, Mrs. Summers' face became flushed and she arose, saying:

"I can't remain and listen to such talk, Vivian."

Then she left.

X

I HAD many times before seen Vivian angry, aroused, in arms as it were. But always her anger had been directed at me—and much of the time she wasn't as angry as she had pretended. But there was no pretense now. Her dark eyes glowed and her face was set hard while the two little delicate hands clutched the tablecloth while she stared after her sister.

"That's just the way with Suzanne," she exclaimed, turning toward me. "She won't face the truth. She won't acknowledge it. She knows she doesn't love that man. How could she? But she thinks that she ought to and so pretends that she does—tries to deceive herself. He gets drunk every night and she pretends not to notice it. When I call her attention to it, she refuses to listen to me. She says it is not right for her to listen!

"I hate that fellow. I never did like him. The only reason I stay aboard this old ship is because I love her. But Don, Melville Summers has got on his last drunk aboard the *Hesperus!* He'll be furious, but you will help me, won't you? I'm not afraid of him though he is an ugly devil when he is angry.

"Suzanne owns this boat and he acts as though we were both allowed to stay here because of his generosity. I am going to tell the steward to throw every drop of everything to drink into the bay, and not to bring aboard anything more. There will be trouble, but, my Lord, there's been nothing but trouble since Suzanne married him.

"We have known him for years; knew him when we were children. I never did like him. But he is the only man that ever made love to Suzanne. She stayed in a convent most of her life, you know. They couldn't keep me there. I simply wouldn't

Digitized by Google

stay. Then she left the convent and went to keep house for Uncle Robert.

"His house was even quieter than the convent. He was a good old fellow, in a way, though I never particularly liked him; but nobody thought he was rich—at least, anywhere near so rich as he was. His business was handled through a New York firm, Brock and Brock. I've often wondered if Melville didn't learn in some way that uncle was so very rich, and if that wasn't what made him come back so suddenly to Philadelphia and practically force her into marrying him.

"I say 'force'—of course I don't mean that. He just swept her off her feet with his wooing. She had never known anything like it before. He said that he had always loved her, and that he just got to thinking, and thinking about her in New York, and how much better she was than any woman he had ever known, so he threw up his job in New York and came back to be near her. You can imagine what all that did to Suzanne's heart. A convent may be good for your soul, but knocking about the world a little has its compensations; and if Suzanne had known more about men she would have thought less of Melville.

"Uncle Robert didn't want her to get married, but Suzanne told me herself that she insisted, so he got Melville a job and the marriage took place. Less than a month later Uncle Robert was killed—auto ran off the bridge. His body was found, but that of the chauffeur never was.

"He was a new chauffeur—one that Melville had recommended too. Used to drive for a lawyer friend of Melville's in New York. The newspapers made a sensational story of his death. He was well known. But that was nothing to what they did when it was learned how much money he had left—and every cent of it went to Suzanne.

"I don't and never have felt the slightest jealousy. Suzanne deserved it. Uncle Robert was very liberal toward me and I treated him shabbily. I didn't like him very well. That is, we couldn't get along well. He was always lecturing me—perhaps I needed it, Don, but it isn't pleasant. You are the only person that has had the right to lecture me," she said with a glint of humor in her eyes.

"I was with Melville when the news of Uncle's death came. Of course, I had come home for the wedding and remained because Suzanne wanted me to. We used to talk a great deal and she was intensely interested in you and asked a lot of questions—I had to put all the blame onto you, Don.

"You know how Suzanne feels—being a Catholic and all that, and thinking that if you ever love one man you must do anything and everything for him. But you are a dear fellow, Don. You never blamed me, you never abused me in any way, I have often thought of it. And some men—why am I such a big fool?"

I said nothing. I made no sign. After a pause, during which she looked at me expectantly, Vivian said:

"Oh, I started to tell you about Melville. We were all in the house. Suzanne was playing and I was reading while Melville sat listening. The telephone rang. He answered it. I thought he was going to faint. He fell over into a chair. His face was white as a sheet and he trembled like a man that has had every nerve unstrung.

"'Your uncle has been killed. Oh my God, what will we do!' he said in a kind of hoarse, smothered scream. From that moment to this he hasn't been himself again. Why, even before uncle's will was read," and she lowered her voice, "he was bargaining for this yacht. You see what that makes me think.

"Remember, that chauffeur's body was never found! Remember how he had suddenly turned up after an absence of three years and practically forced himself onto Suzanne. I hate to think it, Don, even as much as I dislike the man—but how can I help thinking something was wrong?"

"The threats," I asked, "what about them?"

"The very day that Uncle was buried he told Suzanne that he had received threatening letters saying that somebody was going to 'get' him and her, too. Yes, and me, too. Suzanne was dreadfully worried. I didn't pay much attention to it at first. And I wouldn't now, Don, if it were not for Suzanne; especially since you have come. I was never so glad and so surprised to see anybody in my life! I was even glad to have Claude around—he's a friend, anyway. Poor youngster—if he knew.

"Don't ever tell him, Don. He really worships me. And I never harmed him. Really, I have never encouraged him or promised him anything. Honest. You

Digitized by Google

don't believe me, but it is true. Oh, Don, if I had my life to live over again—I would do everything just as I did, excepting that one thing! I won't ask you to forgive me, Don. I have never forgiven myself."

After a pause she went on:

"About Suzanne—Melville told her the best thing we could do was to go aboard a yacht and stay there until the trouble had blown over. She didn't want to go. But he frightened her into it. I thought at first it was just a trick to get her to buy the yacht. It cost a fortune—costs a fortune to keep it up. But I guess not. I guess he really had cause to be afraid. But why? He says he doesn't know. And Don, I know he is not telling the truth! I've told him so, too."

"But doesn't he," I asked, "seem at times to love or at least to care for Suzanne, I mean your sister?"

She was thoughtful for a few moments, then said—

"I don't know. He is a strange fellow, Don. I don't know whether his love for Suzanne is real, or whether it is just a mask, or whether it is just a kind of salve for his conscience.

"But he is not going to get drunk aboard this ship again while I am on it. We can see to that. You will help me, won't you? Won't you?"

I knew I was preparing myself for much unpleasantness, but I said that if she would get Mrs. Summers to ask me to use my influence to keep her husband from drinking that I would feel that that would give me sufficient reason for letting Mr. Summers know why I was ready to interfere with his pleasure and personal liberty.

"I will do it," she said. "And moreover, Don, before I go to bed, I am going to tell Suzanne the whole truth—everything. I want her to know just what a fine fellow you are. Why, any other man would have —would have killed me! You saved me—but Don," she added in a low, pleading voice, "you did not forgive me. Please do. I love you, Don. I never loved any man but you. That is as true a word as I ever spoke. Won't you, Don?"

I told her as pleasantly as I could that we would talk of our affairs some other time.

"I know. I know," she said, turning her head aside and drumming on the table with her fingers.

XI

I HAD no sleep that night. After a long talk with her sister, Vivian succeeded in getting Mrs. Summers to ask me to use my "influence" with her husband to get him to stop drinking. "Influence" is an elastic word. I admit that I did influence Mr. Summers, but perhaps not in the way that his wife expected.

Mrs. Summers had not liked me from the first, and what Vivian told her when those two were talking together for an hour or more before Mrs. Summers came back into the dining-room made her even more suspicious. I could see that she thought Vivian was debasing her own reputation to clear mine. She could not believe that what Vivian told her was the truth.

When she came out to me Mrs. Summer's eyes were red from weeping, and her lips trembled as she spoke. She said that she was sorry Melville had been so discourteous, but that of course he was suffering from great worry and that she tried to overlook his weakness; that he was a different man entirely before all this trouble came upon them, but that it hurt her very much to see him drinking, and that if I could say or do anything that would help him she would be grateful.

I could tell that Vivian had bullied her into saying it. In fact, I had never seen Vivian so assertive, so capable before. The girl that I had known was petulant, whimsical, and much less like a mature woman than the Vivian before me.

Mr. Summers had a cabin to himself. It made drinking more convenient, I suspected than to share it with his wife; besides, there was plenty of room on board the *Hesperus*.

After Mrs. Summers had spoken to me, I told Jensen, his valet, to tell Mr. Summers that I would like to see him for a few minutes. I did not enjoy the prospect of the interview. I did not intend to make it a formal, moralizing interview, either. Jensen came back and said that Mr. Summers was sleeping and asked if I wished to have him awakened. I said no, but asked that he let me know as soon as Mr. Summers was up.

Vivian went to see Westerman and give him instructions to throw over every bottle of wine and liquor. I understood that there was a great deal of it on board, too.

Digitized by Google

"I like it, too," she said, smiling at me, "but we are going to practise a little self-denial aboard the *Hesperus*,"

When Vivian had gone I sat at the table shuffling a pack of cards and studying over what she had told me about the things that made her suspicious of Mr. Summers.

He had come back suddenly after two or three years absence and urged the unsophisticated Suzanne into marriage; he had recommended the chauffeur who drove Robert Rublee to his death; he had, Vivian learned, begun negotiating for the purchase of the *Hesperus* before the Rublee will was read.

That last seemed strange, for ordinarily there is not much delay between the death and the reading of the will by interested heirs. And he had evidently wanted the yacht as a hiding-place, or rather a place of protection against certain parties who, according to Vivian, threatened him even before Rublee was buried.

I was shuffling the cards and thinking, for I can think very well when my fingers are busy, and trying at the same time to see just what I could make out of what Vivian had said, when I became aware of a presence beside me.

Mrs. Summers had come up so softly that I had not heard her. I stood up.

I was extremely sorry for her. She looked more than pathetic, she was a woman torn with anguish, and her big, brown, soft eyes, were encircled with lids red from much crying; and her face was swollen from crying, too.

"Mr. Everhard," she said in a low, broken voice, staring at me earnestly, "Vivian has told me something awful this evening. I want to ask you if it is true. You will tell me the truth, won't you? She thinks that I do not trust you, but I do. Of course, Mr. Everhard, I have always thought that you did my sister, my baby sister, too, Mr. Everhard, a terrible wrong. But tell me, did she leave you and go——"

"Mrs. Summers," I said, holding up my hand to interrupt her, "as far as Vivian is concerned, let your mind be at peace. It seems that every woman must sacrifice herself in some way for the man for whom she cares—or has cared in the past. Don't believe anything that Vivian has ever told you that casts discredit upon herself.

"In her wild, generous, impulsive way, she probably thought that she was doing me some good in your estimation by telling you disreputable things about herself. Women, I have noticed, seem to think they cannot show their love unless they make themselves suffer. Let us not talk of it any more."

Mrs. Summers rewarded me with a bright light in her eyes. I would as readily lie before the judgment bar if I could think that it would do any good.

"Thank you, thank you very much," she said, impulsively putting out her hand to touch me, "I couldn't believe it. I knew it wasn't so. And, oh, I felt that you would tell me the truth."

"It was splendid of Vivian to try to gild my character," I said. "But I hope you will think that I have changed enough since those days to be—well, to be a little different now—better, you know."

"I don't like to think of it at all. Vivian is my baby sister—I always think of her as that. I could not believe that she would do such a thing—no, or you, either. Oh, she even said that you—that you shot the man with whom she went away. I can't understand why she would say such a thing as that."

I could not very well tell her that the man had shot himself without I admitted to her what I had just been at such pains to deny; that is, unless I admitted that Vivian had gone off with a man. I said:

"Let Vivian think that you believe her, Mrs. Summers,—but don't believe her. And don't say anything more about it to her. How could I have—have done anything to anybody if nobody did what you think? Don't you see that the whole story is badly mixed. I left Vivian. I am to blame. I am sorry."

"Why do men make us suffer?" she asked sadly and did not await an answer, but walked away as quietly as she had approached.

I would not have been able to give her one anyway.

Vivian had, just before we parted—five years before—gone off with a man who had no right to take her. I did not feel sorry for him in any way. He was no earthly good. He was married and had children. He had forced himself upon Vivian's attention. She did not know that he was married, and even doubted me when I went after her and told her the truth.

Digitized by Google

As for the man—I did not shoot him, though she always thought that I did. His estate was sufficiently large to provide for his wife and children, and they were better off and happier without him. I had put Vivian on the train and sent her back to New York, alone; so when she read in the papers the next day that he had committed suicide she thought that I had killed him and concealed the crime. All that I had done was to send a loaded revolver up to his room with my card.

XII

IT WAS two o'clock when Mr. Summers awakened. I had come into his cabin and sat down some hours before. Every one else had turned in excepting the man on the bridge and the man at the gangway. The lights were burning in his cabin. He kept them burning at night.

When he was awakening he writhed as though in the midst of a bad dream. He groaned slightly, then in a few moments smacked his lips and rubbed his mouth as though to remove a disagreeable taste. He barely opened his eyes when he turned his head restively from side to side, breathing heavily and grunting as if in pain.

His hair was touseled; his collar was awry, being unbuttoned in front as though he had clawed at it to ease the pressure on his throat.

He stared at me for a moment, stared dully, unseeingly, then put his hands to his head and rolled over with a groan. He was not wholly awake, but was suffering from the usual effects of too much to drink.

"What time is it?" he asked weakly.

"Two o'clock."

He rolled his head over again and looked at me for some time, apparently trying to discover what I was doing in his room at such an hour. I continued to sit with my arms folded looking at him. He gasped—

"Oh, but I am sick!"

I displayed no sympathy. I said nothing.

He made an effort to sit up, but his head seemed so dizzy that he could not keep it up. He fell back again, holding his head and groaning.

I had seen too many men when they were getting over a drunk to feel even interest in him, much less have sympathy for him. I never drink, so I don't know what joy there is in it. But I think that even heaven itself is hardly worth gaining if one must awaken in hell for it.

It may be that I undervalue the joy of alcohol, but so long as I want my temper to be controllable, my fingers to be as skilful as though they had brains under their nails, and my eye to be accurate, I don't think that I care to do anything that will make me awaken looking, and feeling, and acting, as Mr. Summers did that morning.

"Water, water," he said weakly.

I handed him a glass.

He sat up and drank it, then started to lie down again.

"You had better get up," I said. "I want to talk to you."

"What's happened? What's the matter?"

"Much," I said.

He looked at me apprehensively, then slowly put his feet on the deck and sat hunched on the edge of his berth.

"What's the matter?" he asked again.

"Who is Black Jeff?" I asked, looking hard into his eyes.

Every muscle in his body seemed suddenly wrenched by a spasm of fear. His nerves were about as loose as a man's can be, anyway; and that question coming at him without a preliminary of any kind, and coming most unexpectedly from me who, presumably, knew nothing of Black Jeff, was like a blow on his head. His eyes seemed to bulge and his mouth dropped and hung open for a few seconds.

"I asked you," I repeated slowly, "who is Black Jeff?"

Mr. Summers was shivering like a man with ague. His jaw actually shook as he asked:

"Wh-where d-did you hear of him?"

"That," I said coldly, "has nothing to do with it. *Who is Black Jeff?*"

My manner was not calculated to make him be at ease. He could not very well avoid feeling that there was something ominous in my attitude as well as in my question. I was not in his cabin to dawdle. I had no respect for him; and of course, none whatever for what he cared to think of my rudeness, or presumptiveness in forcing questions upon him. He knew that I was in earnest.

He turned his eyes from me, and getting up walked about two paces to a chair and slumped into it before a table upon which was a decanter of whisky. Very unsteadily,

Digitized by Google

and spilling much of the liquor on the table, he poured for himself a brimming glass.

I roughly knocked it from his hand as he was lifting it to his mouth. It fell, the whisky spilled on the table.

He swore a vicious oath and started up angrily, furiously.

"Sit down," I said. I don't believe that I spoke much above a whisper. But after a moment's hesitation he sat down, shrinking back from me as though I had leveled a gun at him.

I had knocked the whisky from his hand, not because I had promised Vivian and his wife to use my "influence" to keep him from drinking, but because I had no intention of allowing him to fortify his nerves. I wanted his nerves to be as frazzled as it was possible to make them. That was why I had knocked the glass from his hand instead of removing the decanter when I saw him reach for it.

With a few drinks of whisky in him, Mr. Summers would probably have been an insolent and difficult man with whom to deal; but coming out of a drunken sleep at two o'clock in the morning, and obsessed continuously by fear, he was in no condition to bluff. It was no easy matter to get what I wanted out of him, anyway.

"Who—who are you?" he stammered.

He was shaking like a man almost frozen; his whole body trembled and his teeth rattled.

"This morning I told you that I would remain aboard the *Hesperus* on condition that I could do what I thought was right—and I promised not to call in the police without your permission. The police are out of the question. I am doing what I think is right, and you shall answer me—not I answer you. You have lied to your wife, you have lied to Vivian, you have lied to me, and I am not sure but that you have lied to yourself.

"This afternoon when I went ashore a friend of Black Jeff's called me up over the telephone in my apartment and gave me certain reasons why I should have nothing to do with you. Some men might consider that they were very effective reasons."

"W-hhat d-did he s-ssay?" Mr. Summers with difficulty managed to ask.

"What do you suppose he said!" I answered contemptuously, as though there could be no question about it.

He gasped and distorted his face as though he were about to cry. The man was not acting; he was simply shattered. He fell forward onto the table, his head on his arm.

I had no wish to torture him. I was not enjoying it. But I did not think it well to give him a moment's peace, or rather to give him a moment to try even to pull himself together.

I tapped him on the forehead with the back of my fingers and said:

"Sit up."

He sat up; but his eyes were dull, his head hung heavily to one side and he was breathing in gasps through opened mouth.

"Now Summers," I said, "we might as well have this over with. Why did you do it? Tell me that."

I had no clear idea whatever as to just what he had done. But I knew that a man who acted as he did, had done something; I knew further that it was something of which he was fearful and, remembering what he had said about not daring to bring in the law, also criminal. Furthermore, it was something that he dreaded to have his wife know. Also, I had definite suspicions.

Again he fell forward on the table, but both arms hung loosely at his side.

"Money—money—of course."

His voice was weak, almost inaudible.

PERHAPS it was the fact that his face lay where the whisky had been spilled, so that the fumes were in his nose, that prevented his fainting. In a moment he was pressing his face against the spilled liquor, and eagerly sniffing it. I removed the decanter from the table and placed it on the floor, and almost at once he raised his head and looked over the table for it. Then he begged me piteously for a drink.

I said nothing. I listened to his begging, I listened to his cursing, I listened to this threatening, and tried not to move even the muscle of an eyelid. He began to grow wild and raised his voice so that I thought it would attract attention; but I had had enough experience with men in alcoholic hysteria to know that they more readily grow quiet if the one to whom they are talking keeps still.

Besides, I hoped that he might recklessly give himself away by his wild talk; but his words were confined to damning me, to

Digitized by Google

telling me how I had deceived and betrayed him, and what a spy I was; and to telling me that he wasn't afraid of me or the whole world, and that I and Black Jeff could together go to hell, where we belonged.

I don't know how long he talked. Anyway, he wore himself out. His was not a case of delirium tremens. He was not crazy or out of his head. He was a nervous wreck; and I began to think that I would be one too before the ordeal was over.

When he stopped talking and leaned forward glaring at me across the table, I began to talk. I had been thinking hard while he ranted, and wondering whether or not to take a chance at guessing at certain facts; but I was sure that if I guessed ambiguously enough I would seem to him to be speaking accurately. So I put my elbows on the table and leaned toward him, but there was nothing angry or even tense in my voice as I began to speak. I stated as a matter of fact:

"Mr. Summers, all that you have said has been interesting, but now listen to me for a few minutes. When you married Mrs. Summers you knew that she was coming into millions as soon as her uncle died. You didn't marry Vivian. You didn't try to marry her—you couldn't have done so. Perhaps you know why. But you didn't care to.

"A month later the uncle was killed while being driven by a chauffeur whom you had recommended. Before the contents of the will were known to either your wife or to Vivian you were making arrangements to buy this yacht, which represents an outlay of money much greater than the supposed inheritance of Robert Rublee would have justified.

"Immediately after the death of Rublee, you began to talk of 'threatening' letters from anonymous parties. Of course, they wanted their share of the estate! Of course they wanted you to keep your part of the bargain.

"And now, Mr. Summers, you explain those things fully to me and begin to do so at once, or I shall send for your wife and let you explain them to her."

After a pause I asked:

"Who is Black Jeff?"

Mr. Summers ran his hands through his hair and bent his face over the table. He pulled at his hair as though to tear it out.

"You won't tell her? You won't tell her?" he begged, raising his anguished face toward me and throwing out his hands in a gesture of supplication.

"No," I said. "I shall tell her nothing."

"Jeff's a negro crook I knew in New York."

"Well?" I asked as though he had told me nothing.

"He was one of the gang. Bowers used him."

"And Bowers?" I asked.

"The biggest crook that ever lived—the—oh—him! There's nothing he wouldn't do. There's nothing he couldn't do! Jeff's nothing but a big negro who does what Bowers tells him. They all do what Bowers orders them. I'm the only one that's ever crossed him—and lived. And he'll get—my God, I know he will get me! But I won't do it—Everhard, I won't—I won't let them kill my wife!"

He screamed the words and fell forward sobbing.

XIII

I AM not easily shaken, not easily moved. But my heart beat much faster as the meaning of his words burst within my brain.

It may seem rather strange, but I put my hand on his shoulder, touching it gently. Such is the strange stuff of which our destinies are woven, that only by that most horrible admission could he gain from me the slightest sympathy. Of course I understood at once the plot in which he was caught. It was evident enough. The death of Mrs. Summers would leave him in control of her fortune, even as the death of Rublee had left her in control. And in control of those millions, he would be expected to divide them.

I do not judge men so much by what they have done as by what they are doing and what they are trying to do. Summers could not be wholly bad, though he was at his best, I believe, little more than a weakling. But whether he revolted because he loved her, or because murder was abhorrent to him, was not for me to debate. To those people that make fine discrimination in moral values and that assay problems of casuistry, his motive in trying to defeat the plan to murder his wife would probably have been of decisive importance.

Digitized by Google

Of course, I too would have thought better of him had I been positive that he really loved Suzanne. Not for a moment did I believe that he was actuated by avarice; that is, that his motive in trying to keep his wife alive was to keep from having to share the money. He would certainly have retained a big share of it anyway.

But I did not have much time to meditate just then. Mrs. Summers had heard him scream and she came in breathless anxiety, pounding on the door which I had taken the precaution to lock lest Summers try to escape from my questioning. Vivian too had been aroused. The sentry who stood at the gangway, hearing the scream and seeing the women rush from their cabins out on the deck, was also at the door when I opened it.

"Is he hurt? Is he hurt?" Mrs. Summers cried at me.

She stood there in night-dress, her hair down, barefooted even, and was utterly unconscious of her appearance.

I barred the way and she tried to push by me. The sentry stepped up as though he were about to add his strength to hers.

"Mr. Summers is all right," I said. "He is nervous—that's all."

"Let me in! Let me go to my husband," she cried, and her soft hands pushed and beat against my shoulder.

Vivian, who had taken time to get into slippers and a red kimono, put her arms about her sister and tried to calm her.

To the sentry I said:

"You will not be needed."

He reluctantly moved away.

I don't think that Mr. Summers raised his head through it all. He was as nearly crushed as a man can be. I glanced at him several times while I was keeping Mrs. Summers out and was trying to think of something plausible to say by way of explanation, but his head, buried in his hands, never moved from the table. He had not fainted. I could hear him sobbing.

I was fearful that she might have heard his words. He had screamed:

"I won't let them kill my wife!"

But as she did not refer to that while I was barring the way on more or less of a pretext that there was no need for her to be so agitated and alarmed, I became reassured.

"Why won't you let me in? Melville! Melville! Are you hurt? What do you mean by keeping me out? Let go of my hands!"

Thus Mrs. Summers talked to the three of us, and struggled with Vivian at the same time, for Vivian was trying forcibly to hold her quiet, with the natural result that Mrs. Summers became more and more hysterical.

I was more surprised at Vivian's poise than at the refined, delicate Mrs. Summers' wildness. The gentlest of women when stirred by emotion seem to lose all control. I knew very well then that Vivian had been mistaken when she said that Suzanne did not love Summers, but simply felt that she ought to.

A woman, such as she, does not fly into hysteria at the thought that a man may be hurt unless she feels much more than a mere sense of duty toward him. I was not surprised that she did love him. I was surprised that a woman of her character and up-bringing could, in the first place, have become in love with him; but once she did—well, I sometimes wonder if any woman ever loves more than once in her life, and if all the men who come afterward are not visualized in her mind as the man who first awakened yearning within her and who first set passion in her heart.

She had suffered much from him; but on the other hand she had had no caress nor tenderness from any other man, and it takes a great deal, a very great deal, to kill the love of a woman who has never been wooed but once, particularly if she is a woman of ideals. I had not been sure before that Vivian was not right when she said what she did to Suzanne at the dinner-table.

Knowing full well that Summers was unworthy of her in every way, I had been inclined to think and to hope that she did not love him—but had I pondered the conditions, I would have known better. Women, most women at any rate, will continue to love a man who is unworthy of them just as, and for much the same reason, that a little girl will not discard, though she may weep over it, a favorite doll that has been cracked.

I did not want her in the cabin. I wanted to finish with Mr. Summers—to get the entire story from him with all the details. By the time she would get through with him and I would have another chance to talk with him alone, he might again be

Digitized by Google

evasive and the whole ordeal, or another something like it, might have to be repeated.

"Mrs. Summers," I said low and confidentially, looking furtively over my shoulder as though I did not want him to hear me, "your husband must not be disturbed now. To break off drinking suddenly this way is racking on his nerves—and he is much upset. It will really be best for you not to see him."

"Oh—" she answered in a rather amazed, joyful, incredulous tone, looking past me at the wretched man who lay against the table with his fingers writhing in his hair.

"Has he really——"

Vivian hesitated to finish the question, it seemed too improbable to be true.

"I think so," I said. "He hasn't taken a drink since I came. He started to an hour or so ago—but he dropped the glass while it was on the way to his mouth. I honestly don't believe he will touch another drop for some time—that is, if he isn't disturbed and made more nervous than he is."

"Why did he scream just now?" Mrs. Summers asked.

"Nerves. Nerves," I said. "He has been under a very severe strain—and to stop all of a sudden. It is hard, you know."

"Suzanne! You'll catch cold. Look how you are!" Vivian exclaimed, trying to draw a fold of her kimono around the body of her sister.

Mrs. Summers, aware of her appearance, blushed in confusion and clutched at the thin night gown. Also she was proud of, as well as reassured about, her husband, and she started away at once.

Vivian, too, turned to go; but she looked back at me with questioning, incredulous eyes. She knew that I was concealing something. But I said:

"That is right. I don't think he will drink again."

Then I closed the door and turned to him.

At once he was on his feet, his face drawn with suffering, and his trembling arms raised above his head, while he said:

"Oh I must have a drink! Just one. I heard what you said. But just one. Then I'll never drink again. Oh give it to me! I must have it. Can't you see I must have it! Oh, I have made a beast of myself. I am a beast, a dog, a cur, but I must have one more drink. Just to settle my nerves. My God, man, you can't refuse me!

"I do love her—I do—I do—you don't believe me! —— you and your cold nerves of steel. You don't know what it is to be torn to pieces—with a thousand—a million devils inside of you, gnawing and tearing at every nerve in your body. Oh —— you, —— the world. Oh —— everything!"

He fell across his bed sobbing, sobbing like a heartbroken child. I had said nothing, but when he had started around the table toward the decanter I had placed on the floor, I stepped between him and the whisky and shook my head.

XIV

ANOTHER hour passed and no word was spoken. But during that hour I had plenty of time to think.

He had soon stopped sobbing, but he turned and twisted, threw his arms about and sighed heavily almost every minute. Once in a while he would rise on his elbow and look at me with glowing, mad eyes as though he were trying to determine whether I was or was not a friend.

At the end of about an hour he seemed much quieter. Then I spoke to him. I told him that I would do what I could to help him, and that I would do something more than offer merely defensive protection; that we would carry, as the saying is, war into Africa.

I tried to impress upon him that the crucial hour in his life had struck, that he now had the chance to regain his self-respect and to atone for the evil plot into which he had got himself—a plot that already had entailed the death of one man. I am not much good at moralizing, but I seemed to impress him. He again pleaded for a drink of whisky, but I refused to give it to him; and after some evasion and much hesitation, he began to talk.

He told me that from childhood he had known Suzanne and Vivian, and that as a youth he always liked Suzanne, but had never thought of love.

Some years ago he had gone to New York, but he did not write to Suzanne. He scarcely ever thought of her. In New York he had had a job with a brokerage firm. He liked the gayer side of the city life and spent most of his money with women that are sometimes described by people with more sentiment than sense as "the moths of the Great White Way." He

Digitized by Google

lived, in fact, such a life that when a brainy crook, afterward known to him as Bowers, was casting about for somebody to steal certain records from the brokerage office, he was offered a sum of money.

Summers had protested that he might be suspected and so have his "career" ruined; but otherwise admitted that he would be ready to do it if the sum offered were large enough. Then it was that Bowers offered to see that he was taken care of in the future and put in a position to pick up "easy money."

Summers stole the records; he was not suspected; but he was eager to pick up the "easy money." Bowers tested him out, rewarding him well enough each time; and at last Summers had been taken somewhat into the confidence of the very capable gang that this extraordinary crook controlled.

Bowers was a capable fellow with many interests. Summers did not know the extent of Bowers's operations, but had some reason to believe that they extended into many departments of crime. Summers himself was put into the blackmailing gang. Blackmailing, as Bowers directed it, was a safe and sure and profitable operation. He had remarkable facilities for finding out things that people did not want known; stenographers were bribed, burglars plundered safes and desks, private detectives, innocent of how they were being used as tools, were hired to shadow men and women and collect evidence.

Bowers was organized on a business basis. When he had the evidence he needed, a duplicate was sent to the victim with the threat that unless a stipulated amount was at once forthcoming the original evidence would be placed in the hands of the parties whom the victim would least want to see possess it. If the first demand was ignored, another was sent and the amount stipulated was increased.

A third time this was done, and then the victim was crushed as much as he could be by having his misdeeds made known to his family, his employer, or to the public—for in his usual efficient way, Bowers was able to frame up a story interesting and safe enough to be accepted by the more sensational papers.

It was seldom he had to resort to an infliction of the penalty for disregarded demands. And once the victim paid—well, he continued to pay regularly or face th dreaded alternative.

Bowers was capable and ruthless, fa sighted and eager to seize any opportunit

In some way, of which Summers did nc know the details, Bowers had learned th contents of Robert Rublee's will, whic was kept in the office of his New York agent Brock and Brock. The fact that th money, which amounted to millions, wa left to an unmarried woman, gave the per ceptive Bowers an idea.

Summers, being something of what i known as a "ladies' man," was called in b Bowers and told to go to Philadelphia an investigate. But Summers had no need t go to Philadelphia to investigate—he knev the Rublee family well, knew the histor of the family and knew both girls.

"Then," Bowers had said, "you marr Suzanne. Rublee is old—" and Bower had laughed mockingly—"and can't liv much longer. And then—well, we'll tal of it then. But you'll have control of th estate. Understand, Summers."

Summers claimed that he had not fully understood. He claimed to me that h did not understand that Bowers meant t have the old man murdered, for, at that time, he thought Bowers hesitated at mur der; and Summers insisted that he neve dreamed that Bowers also thought of hav ing Suzanne murdered.

Summers said that he merely had thought that he would be expected to "invest" big sums of money in "losing" propositions so that it would come into Bowers's control and that he was ready enough to do that, for it was agreed that he should be able to retain at least a million of the estate.

Bowers had questioned Summers closely, and had found out every detail about his friendship with Suzanne, then he explained how to go about wooing her.

So it was that Summers had discarded his rôle of a "man about town," and pretending to have cherished all his years in New York a secret passion for Suzanne, and to be an upright and serious man who could no longer endure to be away from the woman he loved or to live in a city worse than Gomorrah, he had gone back to Philadelphia and ardently wooed Suzanne.

Immediately after the marriage, Rublee's chauffeur had left. Summers did not know until he was instructed through Bowers to recommend a chauffeur whom he had never

Digitized by Google

before seen for the vacated place, that Bowers, with his usual adroit manipulation, had enticed the other chauffeur to New York with the promise of much higher wage.

Summers told me that he began to grow suspicious after the new chauffeur was engaged; and that just as soon as he heard over the telephone that Rublee had been killed he knew how and why it had happened.

The very next day he had been notified that Suzanne would also soon meet with an "accident," and that, on some pretext he was to get away from her for a few days and prove a continuous alibi for himself, so that all suspicion of his implication in her death would be removed.

"Then," Summers told me, "I saw what a hellish plot it was and I made up my mind that I would have no part in it any longer. No one knew, at least none of the girls, how great the estate was. The will was in the hands of Brock and Brock. It would be, I knew, several days before its contents were known; but I could not afford to lose any time, I spent sleepless days and nights trying to figure out some way to evade Bowers, and the only thing that seemed at all reasonable was to go aboard a yacht and hire men as a guard.

"I began immediately to look about for an ocean-going yacht that could be turned over to us at once. I don't know how you found out, unless Vivian told you, that I had it all ready almost as soon as the contents of the will were known; and I at once induced Suzanne to buy it.

"Can't you see that I could not tell her the truth—that I had married her deliberately for money? She was so devoted to me, my love seemed to mean so much to her, and she was so different from any woman that I had ever known, so much better and finer, that I began really to love her. I felt utterly helpless, but I was determined that I would keep her away from Bowers's reach.

"He doesn't want to kill me—yet. He wants to get hold of me. But if he killed me—you see, there would be no chance of his getting the money. It is not in my name. I believe that he wants to kill her and Vivian so that I will be the only heir—then—then he will get me. That's his plan.

"That is why they tried to kidnap me last night. I had to meet those business men and get rid of some stocks to raise ready money to keep up this yacht. I wouldn't let Suzanne go ashore, of course. But she authorized me to transact the business for her. I tried to get those men to come aboard the yacht, but they wouldn't do it. I was the one who wanted to do the business—and I had to do it at a sacrifice. But that doesn't count.

"I knew my life was safe—or comparatively so. But I was afraid they would try to kidnap me. And you know what happened. Because they don't dare kill me—yet—that was why Black Jeff didn't cut my throat in the taxi. Maybe he did lose his head and try to stab me when he saw that I was going to get away from him after you appeared. I don't know.

"I was never so frightened in my life as when he climbed into that taxi! God!

"And you—you coming as you did! That was like—I don't know what. But the way you talked to me—I didn't understand you. I don't understand you now.

"You see what a strain I have been under. I simply had to drink. I always did—a little, of course. Suzanne has always had weak wine on the table. Rublee used it. So she thought nothing about my drinking a little wine—but I had to get drunk. It was the only way I could be cheerful.

"It was the only way I could stand the horrible thought that any minute cutthroats might come swarming up the gangway and kill us all! And these men I have hired—I don't let a one of them go ashore—nobody but the steward, and Vivian knew him before he came on board. If a man wants to quit the ship, throw up his job—all right. But he can't go ashore and then come back—Bowers would get to him in the meantime, and then there would be a traitor on board.

"I was even afraid to have you go. So was Suzanne, for of course I have explained to her why the other men can't go. That is, I told her that I was afraid the 'anarchists' or whoever they are, might bribe the men.

"So you see, we are shut off entirely from the world. I am even afraid of that steward—but he loves Vivian. He really loves her. I am sure of that. And my God, Everhard, I have to trust somebody a little whether I want to or not."

He stopped. The last of his strength was gone, and he slumped down in his chair, a pathetic, anguished, foolish man.

Digitized by Google

"There," he gasped weakly, as though placing his life literally into my hands, "I've told you everything—everything."

XV

IT WAS dawn when I left the cabin. I had undressed, and put him to bed, and had sat by his side talking to him and cheering him, giving the wretched man some hope and trying to summon up a bit of courage out of the crushed body.

He had promised not to drink again, too. He said that he did it, not because he would be physically better for abstinence, but because he loved Suzanne; and that he was doing it for her sake. That at least showed the man had something in him worth while—though I knew that it wasn't very much. He was cut from the wrong pattern to be a strong man—but then, the best of men are those who merely succeed in covering up weaknesses.

All men have them, have lots of them; and I do not believe that the man was ever made so strong but that, if circumstances brought the pressure to bear on his weaknesses as circumstances have done on many a poor devil who is dismissed as a weakling from our respect, he too would have his character crumble.

I will admit that I felt that Summers dreaded to do evil rather than wanted to do good. The man who will be content to take an easy living by blackmailing his fellows, who will impose on a refined and innocent and trusting woman and marry her for money—no matter if he does subsequently come to love her—is not the sort of a fellow who can make himself worth while by simply regretting the evil in which he has wound himself. A man's character is not a thing that can be gilded over and made to shine like an image. It is a growth and can't be changed miraculously by a prayer or by signing the pledge.

But at least I believed Summers had told me the truth; I was sorry for him; I was determined to do what I could to rid him of Bowers—but I made up my mind, however, that after his troubles were over, and he was free to enjoy the Rublee millions, that he would continue to be a loving and devoted husband to Suzanne Summers, and that he would cause her not one hour of sorrow, or bring tears to her eyes, or he would then find me arising like *Banquo's* ghost to call him to account.

I knew that it was easy for him to be sincere in thinking that he would be a devoted husband if he could be relieved of the terrible horror that now brooded over him and his wife; but in such men as he, good resolutions oft go glimmering. I did not even intimate anything of that kind to him; or of the understanding I expected to have with him when the potency of this Bowers was destroyed.

XVI

AFTER I left his cabin I went to my own room and washed in cold water, changed my linen, nibbled a piece of chocolate by way of nourishment after the strenuous night, then I went out again. With no difficulty to speak of, I located the steward's stateroom.

I knocked on the door.

I knocked louder.

Westerman evidently had an innocent soul, for he slept soundly.

I was afraid of awakening some one else, or perhaps several people, if I knocked louder; so I tried the door. It was unlocked.

I stepped inside. It was a little after daybreak, so I could see very well.

He lay on his side, sleeping profoundly. I walked over and shook him, and he raised himself in frightened surprise.

"Don't get nervous," I said soothingly. "I've come to return your call. And by the way, I see that with all your solicitation to the contrary, your port-holes are open. Don't you know that Mr. Summers objects to having a draft on board the *Hesperus*. My, oh my, such disregard for duty is exceedingly reprehensible."

His hand stealthily crept beneath his pillow. Poor, deluded youngster, he didn't know that the proper place to keep a gun, if one expects to have to use it suddenly when some one appears, is down under the bedclothes. I sleep with a gun alongside of me, and I always keep one hand under the cover. Any intruder, if he wishes to disarm the party in bed, will look under the pillow the first place.

So I said to him:

"If you will observe, my right hand is in my coat pocket. If you will observe still more closely, you may detect something protruding against the inside of that

Digitized by Google

pocket. And if you use your imagination a bit, you may visualize an automatic of large calibre. The pockets of my coat—on each side of it—are made especially to accommodate the action of the hammer of an automatic.

"So don't bring anything out with your hand from under that pillow. I didn't come in here to fight a duel. I came to have a friendly chat. I suggest that you sit up and offer me a chair."

He didn't know what to make of my manner. He was very puzzled and, I think, a little frightened. But the surprise of finding me in his room was as nothing compared to the surprise he was to have before I left. There were several things I wanted to talk over with him, and one thing that I wanted to tell him. In a way perhaps it was a little foolish of me, but I had eavesdropped on him some time around midnight; and even in the stress of watching and talking with Mr. Summers, I had had time to think over something that seemed to me to concern Westerman.

He did not ask me to sit down, but asked what I wanted. However, I pulled up a chair and sat down.

I asked him what he was doing in my stateroom the morning before. At first he insisted that he had opened the room by mistake, but as this remark did not coincide with the explanation he had given about the port-holes, I soon had him so tangled that he told the truth.

He said, to use his own words, that the man who had been on watch at the gangway when I came on board with Mr. Summers had remarked that I was a "bad-looking customer," and that from the description which the man had given, he, Westerman, was almost certain that I was the same fellow that had for several days been trying to make friends with him when he went ashore.

"This fellow," said Westerman, "offered me money to help him get on board. He claimed to be a friend of Mr. Summers; but when I told him that I would take a note from him to Mr. Summers he said that he didn't dare write. He had a ready explanation for everything, but the trouble was that his explanation wasn't any good. I told Miss Rublee about it and she said that I had done exactly right.

"I thought from the description the sentry gave me that you were the same man—and I just peeked in to make sure. I knew right away that you weren't. He does look something like you—slender and thin faced—but his eyes don't stay steady like yours. You look——"

"Just a minute," I cut in. "I know more about myself than I do about this other fellow. Tell me of him."

Westerman was suspicious of me. He showed it every moment and was obviously afraid that he would tell me something that might be of value to me.

I wanted to know of this fellow that somewhat resembled me—not that I was interested in the resemblance. No. But it seemed plain to me that nobody who meant Mr. Summers harm would wish to come on board alone when he knew that an armed man was at the gangway, and that many more were ready to answer a call; and particularly such a man would not try to get the steward to bring him on board unless he had first bribed the steward to be a confederate. So I began to question Westerman.

"What did this fellow say was the reason he wanted to see Mr. Summers?"

"Said he wanted to do him a favor."

"Why couldn't he write?"

"That is what I asked him. He said he couldn't do that, because then Mr. Summers wouldn't believe him and would be sure not to see him—that he would think it was a trick, but that if he could once see Mr. Summers and just say one word to him, it would be all right."

"And you never told anybody but Vivian?"

"Miss Rublee!" he corrected me with dignity, plainly indicating that he thought me presumptuous to speak her first name on such short acquaintance. I could not help but smile. But I explained nothing, the explanation was to come later.

"It never occurred to you that the man might be telling the truth?" I asked.

"Certainly not. I know something of the dangers to which the members of Mrs. Summers's family are subjected and——"

"Of course. Of course. And you are always ready to close the port-holes to keep cutthroats from climbing through. Is he the only man that had approached you?" I asked.

"The only one in San Francisco. Before we left New York several men at different times tried to engage me in conversation

Digitized by Google

about the people on board the *Hesperus*. We have been here now almost three weeks."

"This fellow," I asked again, "said that he was a friend of Mr. Summers and wanted to do him a favor?"

"Yes."

"You didn't ask what kind of a favor?" I asked.

"Of course not. I didn't talk to him any more than I could help. But what do you want to know all that for? Who are you, anyway?"

"Just at present," I informed him, "that question is a piece of impertinence. I have what is known in a certain class of novels as the 'drop' on you; and if you know anything about the ethics of criminals, it is your cue to answer my questions, not ask them of me."

Memory of the remarks that he had made to Vivian while I sat where neither saw me kept me more or less out of patience with him, though no person on earth could have known better than I that it was absurd to blame him. Yet it is decidedly unpleasant to be courteous to the man who has within your hearing passionately wooed the only woman for whom you ever cared.

Vivian, at least on this occasion, did not encourage him—I noted that with what some people may be inclined to think was jealous eagerness. Perhaps it was.

"To come back to this man of whom you spoke. Did it not occur to you that an easy and safe way to find out whether or not he had it in his power to do Mr. Summers a favor was to bring him on board, let the man at the gangway search him, and while he was covered by a gun usher him into Mr. Summers's presence?"

"No. I never disobey orders," he said with dignity.

"Forget it," I answered coldly. "I know you are a model steward and a model young man—but you do keep late hours."

"What do you mean?" he asked, puzzled.

"Between ten and twelve last night I was sitting in a deck chair just outside Mr. Summers's cabin. At twelve I went inside. That was when you reluctantly said 'good night' and——"

"You stooped to eavesdrop!" He was quite horrified.

"No. I sat."

"You—you——"

He blushed very hard and he was so indignant that he couldn't talk.

"I was there first—was there almost an hour before you and Viv—Miss Rublee came and sat down within fifteen feet of me—just around the corner. For one who is so careful and so suspicious, and who must open a stranger's stateroom to discover what he is like because you can't wait until in the due course of the day he arises and appears on deck, you are very careless in some things."

"You are no gentleman!" he retorted.

"WESTERMAN," I said frankly, and with friendliness. "You are a fine fellow, but you are young; and life will probably hand you many a buffet before you are through with it. And it is no fault of yours if you love Vivian Rublee. I understand perfectly. She is my wife."

He almost leaped out of bed in his amazement; and wholly disregarding the fact that I had assured him that I had an automatic in my pocket, he thrust out his arm and with pointing finger in a gesture of accusation, shouted:

"You lie!"

"No," I said, "never when it is unnecessary. Now you must be quiet—and don't move your hand up toward that pillow."

"That isn't so. You do lie! She is not your wife—she is the pure——"

"Westerman, this isn't a rehearsal or anything like that. I can understand why you think it very discreditable of her to be my wife, and we shall not discuss her reasons for using her maiden name, nor what cause she had for being separated from me. Think what you will. But you had to learn the truth some time. I knew you were in love with her, but I never suspected what kind of love it was until I listened to you last night.

"It is a very severe blow and I didn't soften it any. I know Vivian better than you. If you want her to marry you and she wants to do so, I shall do nothing to prevent it. She will have no trouble in getting a divorce. But she will not marry you, Westerman."

I told him, however, that she and I understood each other much better than he could ever hope to understand her; that a man had to live long or live hard before he could comprehend Vivian so that he could accurately discriminate between her seriousness and her adroit flirtations; but that I knew that last night when she had said,

Digitized by Google

"Claude, I do not love you and I can not marry you," that she meant it.

"Westerman," I concluded, and I had taken both hands from my pockets and was leaning toward him, while he had entirely forgotten the pillow and was hunched over, staring at me with forlorn eyes, "Westerman, I have been up and down the world and I have known many men—all kinds. I believe there is very little that is superstitious or sentimental in me, but I am beginning to think that there is some kind of destiny in this world—a destiny that touches every man and requires that some time in his life he shall meet some such woman as Vivian.

"These women teach us life, its passions and its ambitions, and oftentimes they write out the lesson in blood—for see, were you and I as some men are we would now be at each other's throats. Women are not to blame for the evil they do; they are winged and flaming creatures that swarm over the earth, and they singe and burn and char both the wild and tender hands that we men reach out to seize them—that is, such women as Vivian. I will not say that the only way to meet them is to put on gauntlets of mail lined with asbestos.

"That is all right for such men as proudly like to think of themselves as having 'mastered' a woman—but you would never beat a butterfly to the ground with your cap so that you could then place it in your hand and have the pleasure of thinking you had 'mastered' it because it was too weak and hurt to fly. And there are some men who would as soon think of doing that with a butterfly and being proud of it, as of beating to earth a flaming woman whom they could not hold any other way.

"All that may sound like nonsense to you, but you, Westerman, are not as other men. I heard everything you said to her last night. You are very young, but you have the sort of ideals that are born in the flesh. You should, anyway, have been born six hundred years ago when knights did strangely absurd feats of devotion in a magnificent way. You are out of your time—ahead of it perhaps.

"I thought at first that you had come aboard the *Hesperus* as a steward for a lark—but you are really much in earnest in your devotion. I can tell you that such devotion is new to Vivian. I know. I know the men that have pressed themselves forward upon her attention. You gladly serve her—but would you readily fight for her?"

"I would! I would!" he exclaimed through clenched teeth.

"Yes. Shoot some silly fool that had insulted her and then get yourself hanged. That is the way most earnest men love a woman. Whether it is the woman or a sensitive pride usually called 'their honor,' I haven't quite decided. But, perhaps unfortunately in some respects, the caveman era is passed. We can't go around knocking people we don't like, or those that molest our women, over the head. We have to fight in another way—it is often a silent way, boy, but it is sometimes as deadly.

"Would you, I wonder, be able to lead Vivian from under the nose of a man who had her at his table in a restaurant, and do it quietly? Would any man, I wonder, ever kill himself rather than come down a stairway where he knew you would be at the bottom of it waiting for him? I don't say that I have done those things myself—I only say that the man who wins and holds—holds—such women as she must do all that and more—much more!"

I did not tell him then that the man who won and held such women must also forget. "Forgetting" is what some people, mistake for forgiveness, which is much less difficult.

"What do you mean?" he asked.

I might as well have been talking to an image for all that he understood of what I had said. He even showed that he wasn't sure but that I was a bit unbalanced. No doubt he thought a touch of craziness would explain my manner of coming into his room at that early hour; and that nothing else could explain the way I had spoken of Vivian and of other women such as she. He did not even know that women such as she differed from other women—women who have no wings of flame and are eager to pet men and cook for them. The boy had much to learn of life.

"What I mean is this, Westerman," I said, and when I had finished he was sure that I was something of a lunatic. "You go ashore today and if the fellow who resembles me approaches you again, listen to him. Bargain with him. Let him come aboard the *Hesperus*. Drag him on board if you can't get him here any other way. I shall be on the lookout for you and him

Digitized by Google

and will make sure that he does no one harm. He may know something that we want to learn."

The boy was quite nervous. In his mind there wasn't any doubt but that I was crazy. He could not see what connection there was between what I had just said of the fellow that wanted to see Mr. Summers and the claim I had made of having Vivian as my wife. I could tell that he wanted to handle me gently. He had probably heard that lunatics were dangerous when crossed; and he told more with his eyes than he did with his lips.

"Certainly, certainly, Mr. Everhard. I think that is an excellent plan. Of course I would have done that long ago if anybody like you had been on the *Hesperus* to assist me. Perhaps we shall learn something from him. And—and——"

"And," I cut in, a bit amused, "be sure to remember all that you have heard about the quick wit of lunatics and the way they see through people who try to deceive them."

"Oh, I never thought of such a thing," he began, anxious to reassure me.

"You never played poker much, did you?" I asked.

"No," he said, as though the last doubt of my possible sanity had disappeared with my latest question.

"No. No, you never did," I said, smiling to think of what small chance of success he would have at that cunning game when he showed so clearly on his face every emotion that stirred within his heart.

It was as though the tablets of his brain were his cheeks, whereon each thought was written. Then I added enigmatically—

"You should hie yourself to the card-table. It is where Life bestows the doctor's degree upon students of human nature."

"I shall, Mr. Everhard. I shall take up the study of cards as you suggest," he assured me earnestly.

I arose from the chair, preparing to leave, then I said:

"And think over what I have told you of flaming women and butterflies. Yes, and learn to play poker; that is, if you expect ever to have any more thoughts you wish to conceal. And by the way, the two big doubts now looming at the back of your head will be chased away this morning. First, shortly after she is up, Miss Rublee will send for you. Second, shortly before you make your regular trip ashore, Mr. Summers will send for you."

With that, I left him.

XVII

I HAD some difficulty in keeping myself awake until Vivian was up and out of her room. I sat down and tried to read, but found my mind leaping off in Morphean spaces and tangling the meaning of the words I had read with all sorts of fantasies. I could easily go two days and nights without sleep if there was something to engage my attention; but to simply sit and wait so that I could tell Vivian what to expect from Westerman was not quite exciting enough to keep me awake after even but one night's loss of sleep.

When I did awaken, a soft hand was passing caressingly over my hair and Vivian was standing beside me.

"Poor boy," she said, "why haven't you been to bed?"

I gently took her hand away, patted it, and dropped it. She turned away quickly, but I saw the flash of pain on her face; though almost at once she again turned toward me, and she was smiling, or trying to.

"Sit down, Vivian. Let's talk a minute."

She sat on the arm of a chair near by and looked at me expectantly.

"In days gone by," I began, "you told me many times that I had no sense of the ethical—of what was proper. You remember?"

She shook her head bravely.

"No!" she said.

"It doesn't make much difference. I haven't. For instance, if I hear two people unconsciously talking of things that interest me, I do not cough to warn them of my presence, nor do I silently, discreetly withdraw. I listen. I listened last night to what Westerman was saying to you."

"Then Don," she said, "you heard what I said to him."

"Yes. And I got him up this morning to tell him that you were my wife."

She was a bit startled at first. But she said nothing. Her lips were pressed a little tighter and the small, delicate hands closed together. She was a wonderfully beautiful woman, with dark lustrous eyes and a complexion of burned gold. On her cheeks was the rich, dark coloring of some not so very

Digitized by Google

remote Latin ancestry, and these cheeks suddenly became slightly flushed; and her breathing was faster.

"Don't you think I did right?" I asked.

Her answer came near to disconcerting me. It was not like her to say what she did; which was—

"You are one of the few men who never do anything else, Don."

There was a long silence before I spoke again.

"Westerman thought I was crazy. I doubt if anything you can say will reassure him. I mixed a number of subjects in my conversation and he understood none. I talked to him of port-holes, butterflies, poker and of you.

"Most of it went far over his head. I wanted you to know before he saw you. I think you had better send for him and tell him that I was not entirely crazy. And Vivian," I said as I arose, "I am going in for a bit of sleep. I won't care for breakfast, but be sure to have me called before he goes ashore. I have to assure him on still another point that I am not a lunatic."

I started out. I was almost to the passageway when she called—

"Don!"

I turned.

"Is that all you have to say to me?"

I took a step back and for some seconds we looked at each other. Each knew well of what the other was thinking; in that brief, magical silence the scrolls of the brain were unrolled, and we remembered in detail all that had gone before.

"Don, what can I do, what can I say? Tell me and I will do it. I will say it. Anything. Tell me. Must I beg on my knees for your love? Why did you tell Westerman that if you do not love me? Why should you care what I do—if—if you don't love?"

"It is not a question of love, Vivian."

"You can't forgive?" she asked softly.

I wanted to say, "Who am I to forgive you?" But I said:

"No, it is not a question of forgiving. I don't like the word. I do not like the idea. You know that I never blamed you."

"I know—but you left me."

"And," I said, "I told you why."

"You couldn't trust me."

She said it simply. It was true. Again there was silence.

Then she began to recount some of the things she had done and for which she was sorry. But I asked her not to speak of them. She said that she would speak of them because she wanted me to know that they were worse than I had thought—such is the strange logic that obsesses women when they are anguished.

"Don't think that I am blaming you, Don. But you spoiled me in the way you married me. I was tired and sad and sick at heart that morning when you came to my apartment, pushed past the maid, came right into my bedroom—you shameless man—I loved you for it!—and said that I was going to marry you that morning. You didn't shock me in the least. I wanted to jump up and throw my arms around your neck, but I lay there wiggling my toes in ecstasy under the cover and pretending to not be ready to marry you.

"I was in a terrible mess—you knew that I was engaged to two men already. And I had worried myself sick because you didn't seem to look at me! True, you had said you loved me—but you never seemed worried when I looked at other men. It didn't seem to bother you. Tell me, Don, were you so sure of me?"

"No, I don't suppose it was that. Not the way you mean it anyway. I didn't know you so well at that time, Vivian. You had said that you loved me. I don't want to appear self-righteous. I really don't. But I had never told any woman that before I met you——"

"Is there somebody else now?"

She said it rapidly and leaned forward with her dark eyes narrowed. I was surprised, almost amazed—but it was not displeasing. It was the first time she had ever shown the slightest evidence of jealousy. I had never thought of jealousy, that is, of her jealousy ever being directed at me. I must have smiled a bit, for she came nearer.

"Is there? Tell me!" she demanded.

Particularly after my experiences with Vivian I had left women alone. They were even more unnerving than whisky. I had seen better men than myself wrecked by them or because of them, and besides, as long as I remembered her—she was unforgettable—such other women as I had seen seemed to lack much.

And as for Vivian, had I not by the rarest of chances been forcibly brought to realize

Digitized by Google

that she was in danger, that her life was actually menaced, I would have avoided her. What she had done of those things that the world calls "wrong" were not for me to judge. I have no strong feeling for what the world calls "right" and "proper;" and "sin" has always seemed to be an abstract quality that God Himself must have to puzzle over at times. And as for my "honor," which some people may think was affected—well, I have so far been able to take care of that when I felt that it was touched to my detriment.

I thought more of her than I did of my "honor"—or what is meant by "honor" in the mouths of most people; and I protected her. I went out of my way to get her out of trouble into which she flung herself heedlessly. And I did this in one way and another several times. I left her because I could not trust her—and because I had begun really to believe that she wished me out of the way.

One day she would say, "I hate you," and the next it would be, "I love you." One day it was, "I'll be good for ever!" and the next it was, "I'll do whatever I please." The day that I had left her, she wept copiously. It was one of the days on which she was to be good forever. But I had decided. She said that I was "ever hard" and I had told her that I would ever be. That was why I took the name.

"Is there some one else you love?" Vivian demanded again, coming still closer and speaking low, but with fierce intensity. "Don't—tell me! Is there? I will kill her. I will! I swear it!"

"Shh-hh-h," I said, reproving her and smiling at the same time, for I wished to relieve the tenseness of the situation. "Don't talk that way. It's a terrible thing to kill anybody—and worse to want to kill somebody that doesn't exist. What I was saying was that I had never told any woman before I met you that I loved her, and so I didn't know at that time how lightly the word may be bandied from a woman's lips to almost any man's ears."

But she didn't care for the point I was trying to make.

"And since then, Don," she said, "have you told any woman that you loved her?"

She waited, still tense, leaning slightly forward as though to catch my answer the sooner; and for some moments our eyes met and held. Then I said—

"No."

SHE drew a deep breath and straightened her body. Tears forced themselves into her eyes. They were real. I could tell that she was trying to hold them back. I had seen her cry for my benefit too many times to be deceived. She believed me when I had said, "No." She had always believed me. Perhaps that was why she had also cried real tears when I told her five years before that I was going away and that I would never come back to her. Whoever cares to may think that I belied myself by going on board the *Hesperus* as I did; but as a usual thing I strictly observed the promises I made to myself.

"Don," she asked, "may I tell you the truth?"

She spoke in a voice of humbleness that was new and strange and not pleasing to me. It hurt me; but I could not tell her so.

"Don, you drove me mad because—because you were never jealous. I wanted to make you angry. I wanted to make you furious, and I did things that honestly I did not want to do because—because—honestly, Don, it was because I thought—oh I thought I would crack that cool, icy manner of yours.

"You were like—Don you were like a well-regulated machine that had a proprietory interest in me. Never once did you lose your temper, never once did you scold me. If you had struck me I might have cried—but I would have been so happy!"

I could make neither head nor tail of such nonsense as this; but Vivian spoke as though she really meant it.

"I never threw my cap at a butterfly," I said.

"What do you mean?" she asked. "You never tried to catch a butterfly? You never cared whether you caught or held me? But how did you love when you could forgive me so cool and easy—no matter what I did? Don, I'd never forgive you if you looked at another woman. I know I am not good, but——"

I quickly reached out my hand and pressed it firmly, but gently against her mouth.

"No one else would dare say anything like that before me—and I will not allow you to."

She grasped my hand and pressed it tightly against her lips, and kissed the palm again and again before I could withdraw it.

Digitized by Google

I felt vaguely guilty of wronging her as I pulled my hand away. But it was one thing to have Vivian aglow with passionate endearment for an hour or a day; and quite another thing, as I had found, to keep her so for even a week.

I had been painfully through these vagaries of her affection, and if I had succeeded in making her believe that I was ever cool and calm, it was because both by nature and by effort I could keep emotion from my face and from my gestures. I was not punishing her. There was no thought of such a thing in my head. Punishment is something in which I do not believe, anyway; for to punish, presupposes the power to judge—or rather more than the power, the right.

To evade trouble, to seek protection, is something different, though society had hopelessly tangled the ideas of punishment and protection in its penal codes. I kept my arms from about Vivian because I felt that it would be folly. We had been through all that, and all that it would imply, times without number.

"Don," she said, "why do you suppose that I never got a divorce if it was not because I wanted to stay as your wife? I did take my own name again—but that was simply to save explanations. I couldn't be all the time telling people that I didn't know where my husband was. I told you I would never get a divorce—but you didn't think that I meant it. You said that you never would get a divorce. I knew that you meant it. You always mean what you say. I knew that you were my husband—no matter in what part of the world you were.

"And, Don, I used to wonder. I used to look at the moon and wonder if you too, were not looking at it that very minute; and some way, I felt that we were not so very far apart, and never could be, so long as we both could see the same moon. I didn't expect you to come back to me, for you had said that you wouldn't—that you couldn't trust me!"

She said it ironically.

"That's the whole story, Vivian," I said as kindly as I could.

"I know. I know," she answered impatiently, "but that was long ago, Don. You used to quote something about the 'years make us other men'. Don't you suppose the years make us other women, too? Why are you so cold? Why do you stand there with your arms folded and look at me as you do?

"Oh, Don, Don, why can't you be human! Do something desperate. Anything. But get away from yourself—your cold, reserved, calculating self. I can't think you care for me when you act like this. And you always did act like it. But you do love me, Don? Don't you? You used to say that you did—that you always would."

I do not know what the conversation would have led to if Mrs. Summers had not come in. She was haggard from worry and loss of sleep, and was eager to talk of Melville so she did not notice the seriousness with which Vivian and I regarded each other.

Mrs. Summers nervously apologized for her agitation during the night, and wanted to know how Melville was, and had he slept, and would he be all right, and could she go to see him at once, and what did I think? I told her just about whatever I thought she wanted to hear, and her face brightened perceptibly.

"Suzanne," Vivian said, "Don hasn't had a wink of sleep yet. He must get to bed."

Mrs. Summers said that assuredly I must get to bed at once, and she no doubt meant it, but she continued to ask questions; so that Vivian, perceiving that she would not get a chance to talk further with me alone just then, said with a significant glance:

"I must see the steward at once. Excuse me—there's something I want to tell him."

She was no sooner out of sight than Mrs. Summers very earnestly asked me what, did I think, could possibly have made Vivian tell her the horrible story that she had the night before? Mrs. Summers said that she had been thinking of it continually during the night and she could not understand why Vivian would say that she had committed such a sinful act as to leave me and run away with another man—particularly as I had assured her, Mrs. Summers, that there wasn't a word of truth in it.

I hadn't assured her that there wasn't a word of truth in it, but I was satisfied if I had made her think that I had. It was quite evident that Mrs. Summers was inclined to believe the first story that Vivian had told, that is, that I had deserted her. And Mrs. Summers showed, without intending to do so, that she thought I was a rather brazen fellow to meet Vivian again.

Digitized by Google

I didn't care about that, except that Mrs. Summers was a much finer woman in every way than most that I had known. But she knew nothing about the world; for her the world was divided into two qualities—good and bad. Anything that was good could not be in any degree bad or it would have nothing good in it. That was why she refused to see anything other than good in her weakling, drunken husband. She loved the good; she felt herself incapable of loving anything bad. Therefore if she loved, that which she loved was without flaws. She loved Vivian, too; so perforce, it must be I that was flawed, I who had sinned.

And I did, indeed, have enough flaws and had committed enough sins, not to feel abused if any one suspected me of things that I had not done. At times I have no hesitancy in telling people things that are not so; so I made her assurance doubly sure by saying again that Vivian had told her the gross story of our marriage troubles to make me appear the lesser blameworthy.

XVIII

IT SEEMED that I had just closed my eyes before I was called and told that Westerman was preparing to make his regular trip ashore. I dressed and went on deck.

Mr. Summers, very pale and weak and nervous, but with an expression of hopefulness on his face that was quite new, was reclining in a deck chair with his wife beside him. He greeted me cheerfully, with—

"Hello, old man."

And he shook my hand warmly. Mrs. Summers with motherly solicitation was tucking the rugs about him, and telling him to keep quiet so as not be uncovered.

"You are looking fine," I said.

"But he is so weak and so pale," she said.

"Weak," he said. "I feel like a giant. Haven't taken a drink since last night. And I feel a little wobbly—but fine! I'm all right, Suzanne."

He took his hand from under the rug to pat hers, and she made him put it back, but not until she had pressed it, then fixed the rug into place again, drawing it up close under his chin.

The launch was at the gangway and Westerman, ready to go, came on deck and stood indecisively looking toward me. Then he came forward and ignored me, but asked Mr. Summers if he wanted to see him. Westerman, too, was looking pale.

"No, Steward. There's nothing I want. By the way, you can throw all the booze overboard——"

Westerman started to say that it had been done, but I poked him sharply in the ribs. I thought Mr. Summers would feel better if he was permitted to think that he had had the bottles destroyed; and I knew that he took pride in giving such instructions before his wife.

"At once, Steward," Mr. Summers went on. "Better do it before you go. I want to know the stuff is off the ship."

Westerman hesitated. He wanted to say that it had been done already, but I struck him in the ribs again so that he caught my eye. Then I said——

"And when you have done that, Steward, come back. I think Mr. Summers will have some instructions for you."

He walked away irresolutely, seeming to think that I was assuming a lot of authority that I had no right to, and wishing that he could put me in my place but not knowing just how to go about it.

Then I asked Mrs. Summers if I might speak to her husband a few minutes alone. She answered smilingly, but meaningly, that I could not.

"I won't be shoved off into some dark closet while you two talk. Why can't I hear? Doesn't it concern us all?"

She tried to be pleasant about it, but she was in earnest.

I am not sure whether Summers was so short-sighted as to mean it, or whether he relied upon me to insist that she be not present, when he said—

"Why can't Suzanne hear, Mr. Everhard?"

I answered that I did not think it was advisable; in fact, that I knew that it wasn't.

"Much of it concerns me personally," I added, "and I wish to speak to Mr. Summers privately."

It was, no doubt, rudely put. Mrs. Summers without another word arose and left, plainly indicating that she was offended. And so, she had another reason for disliking me—or thought that she had.

I told Mr. Summers that I thought we had better go into his cabin so as not to be interrupted. He was a little uneasy and

Digitized by Google

kept asking me what I wanted to talk about before he got up from his chair. I pulled the rugs off him and offered my hand as a support; but he said he could walk all right alone. And he did.

Then I told him about the man who had been approaching Westerman and wanted to be brought aboard the *Hesperus*, and I said that instructions should be given to have him brought on board. Mr. Summers protested and said no good could come of it; and that he didn't want to meet anybody associated with Bowers—for he was quite sure that no one else would be trying to come.

I explained that brainy as Bowers was, I did not think he was clever enough to find one man who could do any harm on board the yacht when we were watching him; and that there was the possibility of our learning something of advantage.

He was stubborn and grew more nervous. His voice became excited and he said that it should not be done. When he had finished talking and arguing, I poked my head from the cabin and saw Westerman walking up and down by the gangway. I called to Westerman. Then I turned to Mr. Summers and said:

"Here is Westerman now. Tell him to make arrangements to bring the man on board."

Mr. Summers looked at me in amazement. It was the first time that he had seen me really in earnest.

Westerman came up and stood in the cabin door, and Mr. Summers, after hesitating and after one or two false starts, told him just what I had said to tell him.

I suppose he was more ashamed of himself than he was angry at me, for after Westerman had gone, he said that perhaps it would be better after all. Mr. Summers did not realize that he was a man easily pushed or pulled by others. Considering his character, he had made an astounding display of courage in even running away from Bowers and seeking refuge on board the *Hesperus*.

I came very near to telling him all about my conversation over the telephone with the fellow who had threatened me, but I was afraid that we would have another scene if he knew that I was planning to meet Bowers or some of Bowers's agents; so I kept quiet. He wasn't the kind of a man who could be reasonable when his nerves were disturbed; and I knew that if he was fearful of having one lone man come on board the *Hesperus* that he would be terrified at the idea of me going alone to meet the men that were pursuing him.

I had noticed as soon as I came on deck that his attitude toward me was changed; and especially was this change noticeable after he had reluctantly done as I told him and instructed Westerman to bring the man on board. I understood why when he began to speak after a long silence during which he looked at me as though rather afraid to talk of what was on his mind.

"Suzanne has told me who you are," he said at last.

The inference was that, now that he knew Vivian was my wife, he regarded me as one of the "family." He continued to talk, and eventually said as much. He did not seem to regard me with the disfavor of Mrs. Summers; but rather seemed to think that I could be trusted all the more. He also intimated that he now understood why I had declined to accept any stated sum for what services I might render and said that he would "do the right thing" by me.

I suppose the man had no other way of judging services and could not imagine any other reason for my willingness to do what I was doing, and intended to do, than money. It was useless to tell him that he had the wrong conception. I thought that I could do that more convincingly, later. So I let him think what he pleased and talk as much as he liked.

One rather amusing bit of evidence of the fact that he thought I was now entitled to more consideration was his suggestion that I take a cabin instead of keeping the stateroom. But I declined the offer, and took it as occasion to remark that I would go back and try to get more sleep.

"Have me called before you let Westerman and his man come on board," I said, and left.

XIX

I AWOKE several times, but it was late in the afternoon before I arose. I wondered why I had not been called; if Westerman was remaining ashore longer than usual or had—more or less deliberately I expected—failed to locate the fellow.

Digitized by Google

But I did not want to meet Vivian again, at least not meet her alone, until I had studied, studied, studied, over the question between us. I did not see how we could be happy together. I was, in the least glamourous sense of the word, an adventurer. I went from one place to another and I gambled in all of them.

She had never liked to be a "gambler's wife." Nor could I believe that she would be long content with me. Anyway, I wanted to think the problem over long and carefully before she forced me to say something definite.

So, instead of going on deck, I rang for a boy and had him ask Mr. Summers to come to me.

Mr. Summers did, and he explained that Westerman had met the fellow and told him that he could come on board. But the fellow had said that he couldn't come until after dark because he didn't want any one to know about his coming, and that the yacht was being carefully watched. Mr. Summers was full of fears about what might happen by having him come on board at night. He seemed to think that Bowers was capable of smuggling a regiment of men on board in the clothes of one man.

I pointed out that we knew very well the yacht was closely watched by Bowers, and that if the man had anything of importance to tell us it was natural that he would not want to be seen coming on board.

Mr. Summers said that the man had told Westerman to have a launch at a certain remote point at ten o'clock; and that Westerman had very bluntly said that he did not care for the mission. I remarked that it was fortunate that I knew something about running a launch and that I would meet him.

"But don't you think it a dangerous risk?" he asked.

"It is not half so dangerous as the mix-up we'll both probably be in before this affair is settled," I said.

"But they may knock you on the head," he protested.

"Your nerves are the worst I ever met," I told him.

"I know they are. I know they are. I told you I was a coward—but I can't help it. I want to—to do the things I think ought to be done. I am not nearly so—so nervous when I am with you. But Bowers—I know him. Nobody can fool him. Not even women. He's crazy about women. Big, black, lustful devil!"

"How big?" I asked.

"He's not tall, but broad. He's rather squat. Big body and broad shoulders. Big head but kinky hair. I've often thought he had negro blood in him. But brains—he's a monster."

It is usual for men to be over-estimated by those who admire or fear them. Bowers might be capable—but he was human, mortal.

"And what about women?" I asked.

"He's a sex-gourmand. The most—most lustful man I ever knew. If he sees a woman he wants he'll do anything to get her. Anything."

I snapped my fingers as though to dismiss any such statement. Mr. Summers was obsessed with fear of the fellow.

"I mean it," he said.

"I know you do," I answered. "Bowers may be a brute, and no doubt is—but what of it? There are both men and women who can outwit him. Don't you see, if he makes one mistake—he is gone. That's the reason crooks eventually fail. They have to hold the winning hand every deal and against everybody in the game. The police can fail and fail—that means nothing except a lost clue. But let the crook fail once—and pouf! A gunman can kill a hundred men, but let him be but once one second slow on the draw, and he attends his own funeral.

"Never get it into your head that any man is more than mortal. And a comforting thing to remember is that no matter how frightened you may be, the other fellow is more so—if you don't show your fright."

That wasn't strictly true; but it was true enough to be honest encouragement for Summers, though it was a lot more encouragement than he required.

"Tell me some more about his women," I said. "A man who fools with women is planting dynamite underfoot."

"Not Bowers. He wants a new one every week—oftener."

"Does he fascinate them?" I asked.

"Some, of course. But he likes the ones that hate him. Everhard, you may not believe this, and I am ashamed to tell you. But I have seen that man give up evidence worth thousands when he could make a certain woman come to him. She was—I don't want to talk about it. You know

Digitized by Google

what kind of a fellow I was to be tied up with him—to stay tied up after I knew that."

"Who was she?" I asked.

"She was no good—I shouldn't say that. But she had mixed into trouble."

He mentioned the name of a prominent woman, a society woman.

My dislike for Summers came back stronger than ever—and the fine woman who was his wife worshiped him. I came near telling him—I was that disgusted—that if he had a spark of manhood in him and wanted to do something that would give the recording angel the one chance of his life to write something honorable after his name, that he would go ashore, where everybody could see him, and blow out his brains.

He would need to go ashore so that Bowers would know that he was dead; and he would need to blow out his brains so that there would then not be any chance of his inheriting the Rublee millions which Bowers wanted him to inherit. Yet I am one that honestly believes no man has the right to pass judgment on another. But there are some things which even I can not tolerate.

"Summers," I said coldly, "there may not be a God, but you are taking an awful chance if there is."

Rather abashed he asked what I meant.

I told him in plain language that such men as he were the dregs of the earth; and at that he bristled a little and said that I was a poor one to talk, for hadn't I deserted my wife five years before? Hadn't I been a professional gambler? Hadn't I made Vivian's life miserable for her? Didn't he know all about it? Hadn't she told Suzanne long before he met Suzanne, and didn't she tell him all about me, just as Vivian had told her?

And there was nothing that I could say.

But he added that he wanted to do right; that he was ashamed of his past, and that he was going to be a man from now on.

He was righteously indignant. His voice was high, and having declared himself, he abruptly left me.

I lay down again on the bed, but not to sleep. Through the port-holes I could hear the lapping water against the side, and now and then the long-blown whistle of some craft in the distance. Overhead occasional footsteps passed, and frequently I caught the indistinct sound of voices. There was trouble in the air. No supernatural prescience was needed to warn me. And I was a bit unsettled—not because of Bowers or anything that Bowers might do; but because of Vivian.

XX

EWESTERMAN came to my room and brought with him a copy of the *Chronicle*. I had sent word asking him to do both. He gave me the paper and I tossed it on to the table. I was in no hurry to look in the personal column. Whatever message was there would remain until after I had finished with him.

"Tell me just what happened today," I said. I was in no mood to banter, and he was in no mood to be bantered. He appeared as a man does who has heard bad news.

He told me that when he went ashore he was met by the same fellow that had every day made it a point to approach him.

"I told him at once that he could come on board. He seemed surprised and looked hastily about him as though he were afraid some one had heard. I hadn't waited for him to say a word.

"Then he said, 'I can't go in the daytime. But meet me at nine o'clock at the Crowley wharf. Don't show the lights on your launch until you are away from the *Hesperus*, and put them out before you return. I'm taking a big chance to do this service for Mr. Summers. I am his friend.'

"Then I told him that I didn't know whether anybody would meet him or not; that my instructions had been to bring him on board that afternoon. He was insistent and said that he would be waiting.

"I have told Mr. Summers that I will not make the trip. I am leaving the *Hesperus* tomorrow. Now that you are here, Mr. Everhard, my services do not longer seem necessary."

I smiled at him. His sarcasm was so youthful. But I said:

"Very well. I never served as a steward—but if necessary I might try."

"You have served at many other things though."

He said it with effort. It was an insinuation, almost a charge. The boy was suspicious of me and had not even the judgment to conceal it. I know of no stranger

Digitized by Google

weakness that the flesh of the male is heir to than this of not being able to conceal suspicions.

I looked at him for some moments, but said nothing. Then I laughed. He was quite exasperating, a mere youth, unsophisticated, and he stood there telling me by his manner and eyes that I was a fellow that it would not be wise to trust. Words could not have made plainer the fact that he thought I was a deep and dangerous scoundrel; and he stared back at me, stared hard, apparently believing that he was showing me that he was not afraid.

"Anything more, Westerman?" I asked at last, after we had looked at each other intently for a minute or longer.

"Nothing," he answered shortly as he turned and went out.

He slammed the door, too. And he had been trying to show me that he was cool, and a man more than my equal. I rather admired his impudence. Perhaps when he was older he would appreciate how much more effective it is to shut a door softly when he left a man he had tried to anger.

I picked up the *Chronicle* and turned to the personals. As I had expected there was a notice intended for my eye. It read:

E. We are ready to do business with you. Come tomorrow between 12 and 2.

There was no signature.

"Come between 12 and 2" obviously meant, leave the ship between twelve and two so I could be seen and met and taken to wherever they wished to take me. They had evidently been aware of the fact that the *Chronicle* did not come on board the *Hesperus* until afternoon, and so had set the appointment for the day after. Considering all that had happened, it seemed much longer than twenty-four hours since I had submitted my proposition over the telephone to an unknown party. But all that was merely the preliminary to the most dramatic and intense situation that I ever passed through.

That evening at dinner I was much out of place. I needed no help in understanding that I was out of favor with Mr. and Mrs. Summers—I had never been in her favor, anyway—and Vivian was silent. She looked at me, she spoke to me, but her manner was formal without being cold. She seemed, as it is said, more in sorrow than in anger. She was hurt, or appeared to be.

Nothing of importance, or of interest, was said or done at the table. I was uncomfortable, and I think every one else was as much so. As soon as I could I excused myself and went on deck and talked to the man on watch at the gangway. Vivian came up also and walked about a bit, then she was joined by Westerman who had resigned as steward and was leaving the ship early the next morning.

XXI

AT HALF-PAST eight I had the launch brought around, and told the mechanic or engineer or whoever he was that he would not be needed. He seemed a little surprised that I should be able to run a gasoline engine—as though there was anything difficult about it when the thing runs. I have seen engines that I don't believe Edison could have coaxed into action; but the launch of the *Hesperus* was in fine condition.

It was a dark night, cloudy with a touch of mist in the air, a chilly night, one suited to secret maneuvers.

I made straight for the brilliant tower of the Ferry Building, knowing that I could later get my bearings and head to the wharf; and I was well away from the yacht before I lighted the red and green lamps.

I had scarcely drawn alongside, stopping the engine and gliding to a good landing, when a man in a long coat with the collar turned up so that his face was almost hidden, jumped into the launch and commanded:

"Shove off. Don't lose any time. I may be watched. Anybody can spot this launch."

I shoved off. I did not look around or say anything until we were again well out into the bay. Then I put out the lights, and before the man knew what I was up to I had poked an automatic into his face.

"Don't move," I said. And he didn't.

I ran my hand through his pockets, but found nothing in the way of arms. Then I searched inside his trousers' band and drew out a long knife which I tossed overboard, remarking:

"Makes less noise than a gun, doesn't it? Some people think it more deadly in close quarters, too. But that's because they don't know how to use a gun—properly."

Digitized by Google

Then I shut off the engine and let the launch drift.

"Who are you?" I asked.

He tried to tell me that that was no way to treat him; that he wanted to talk to Mr. Summers and to no one else, and that he was a friend of Mr. Summers. He carried himself very well for a man in a tight fix, although he showed no originality in his remarks.

I had already seen that there was a resemblance between us. He was slender and thin-faced, about my height, too.

I told him that if he did not talk to me, answer my questions and answer them in a way that convinced me he was telling the truth that I would tie, gag and carry him to some remote stretch on the beach and leave him there. By way of impressing this upon his mind, I pulled out the cords that I usually kept with me for use in just such an emergency. At least, I kept them with me when I expected trouble.

He was quite correct in thinking that I meant what I said. But he wanted to know who I was.

"You will learn all that in due time. If you are on the square you have nothing to be afraid of. But we on board the *Hesperus* can't take chances. Who are you? What do you want? Tell me that, and then you can see Mr. Summers. You can't see him or any one else unless you do."

I sat beside him in the stern, and each was intent on searching the features of the other to be more sure of what sort of man each was up against. In the distance the ferries, lighted like floating festival halls, moved across the water; and the lights of Oakland on the one side and myriad jewels of San Francisco burned on the other. But no craft was near us, and there alone we sat and talked in low voices as though we might be overheard.

"How do I know that I can trust you?" he asked, putting a tone into his voice that seemed to show a willingness to talk freely if I convined him that I could be trusted.

That was all very well, and I understood his point of view and his wish to be discreet; also I understood his wish to have an excuse not to talk to me. So I said:

"You don't know that you can trust me. But you will have to, anyway. It isn't a matter than can be argued."

"I knew Summers in New York," he began, then stopped.

"Your name?"

"Lloyd, Fred Lloyd," he said.

"And you are ready to cut loose from Bowers if Summers is ready to pay you?" I asked, making a guess—the only reasonable guess that could be made.

He narrowed his eyes and leaned a little toward me. The question startled him. He at once appeared suspicious and troubled.

"How do you know?" he whispered intently.

I had no wish to pose before him as one to whom strange things were known. In fact, I wished to reassure him. I wanted him to talk. So I pointed out briefly that it was obvious that he came from Bowers, because no one else would be interested in cultivating the steward from the *Hesperus;* it was obvious that he was doing something he did not want Bowers to know because he didn't dare come aboard the *Hesperus* in the daytime; and as Bowers was after money from Summers, it was obvious that he, Lloyd, was taking his own means of trying to get money out of Summers.

"YOU are Donald Everhard?" he asked with just a perceptible change in his manner.

I nodded slightly.

"They're looking you up. You shot Black Jeff, didn't you? For some reason or other, Bowers has suddenly become interested in your record.

"Does Bowers tell you his plans?" I asked.

"No. He doesn't tell any one," he said.

"But," I said, "you heard something about me, didn't you?"

I put my face rather close to his so that he could see. It was a dark night; and I was a bit handicapped, for there are times when I talk as much with my eyes as with my lips. I couldn't say in words, "I dare you to deny that," but I could and did say it, with my eyes.

"Yes," he replied.

"What?"

He hesitated. I waited expectantly. Then he blurted out:

"That you were double-crossing Summers."

"Who told you?"

"Jeff," he said.

"Does Black Jeff know everything that Bowers is considering?"

Digitized by Google

"No," he said. "But Jeff is closer to him than anybody. He likes Jeff. He just uses the rest of us."

"How did Jeff come to tell you?"

"I've known him for a long time. I hate that negro, but you have to treat him—well—he's dangerous. Bowers trusts him. And Bowers must have told him that he would get a chance to pay you back for the bullet that smashed his left collar-bone. Jeff was grinning with delight. He told me you were going to kick in with us—and then——"

"And then?" I repeated encouragingly.

"Jeff didn't say. He just drew a knife across his throat."

And the man drew his finger across his own throat significantly.

"So you think they just want to trap me?" I asked.

"They'll use you first—of course. That's Bowers's way. Then he'll lock you in a room with Jeff. He can still use his right arm. That's more than the match for two arms of the ordinary man."

"Bowers doesn't keep his word, then?"

"Never unless he feels like it."

"But," I asked, "supposing that I should convince Bowers that I am a valuable man, that he needs me in his business—in his other little affairs—others besides this one with Summers—wouldn't he put a check on the negro?"

"I don't know. Jeff would probably cut your throat the first chance he got, anyway. He is not afraid of Bowers. I think Bowers has negro blood in him, too."

"What," I asked, "is the proposition that you have to make to Mr. Summers?"

"I guess I had better make my propositions to you," he answered with just a trace of humor in his voice. "You are giving Summers the double-cross, and I am giving Bowers the double-cross, and you have the goods on me. All you have to do is to pass the word to Bowers and you knock the props out from under me. I get that very plain. I don't think I want to see Summers now."

"No?" I asked.

"No. You have me where you want me, I guess."

"Why did you decide to give Bowers the double-cross? Money or a woman?" I asked.

"How much do you know, anyway?" he countered.

I didn't tell him that I knew all the trouble in this world between men came from two causes—money and women. I replied simply that I did not know anything definite about him, but that I was much interested.

"I'll tell you, and I'll tell you straight, I've been tired of Bowers for a long time. But once you are tied up with him there is no escape. Perhaps you know that he put Summers on to marry this woman and now he expects Summers to split the estate. Old man Rublee was murdered—you know about that. And Bowers wants to get his hands on Summers and scare him into making a divvy. Bowers told me that much. It's a good game. There's money in it, but I am tired of Bowers——"

"Is that all he told you?" I asked.

"Yes."

"He never said anything about Mrs. Summers or about her sister?"

"Nothing," Lloyd replied, "except that he had heard the sister was a —— fine-looking woman, and ——"

"Go on," I said.

"If you knew Bowers, I wouldn't need to finish."

"Why?"

"You would know what he says about every woman that is good-looking," Lloyd said.

"All right. Go on. Why are you tired of him?" I asked.

"I was telling you. I've been tied up with Bowers for three or four years. It was easy money and lots of it. He took me in on this Summers case and said we would be able to shake Summers down for a few hundred thousand, and I was to have fifty thousand dollars as my share. Summers gave us the double-cross, you know. Bowers put him on to the marriage.

"What I am getting at is this. Summers cruised about on that —— yacht of his and we couldn't tell where he was going next. He was at the Bahamas, then up to New York, away to Florida, over to Cuba, and he kept moving about so it was hard to keep track of him. Then Bowers learned that he was trying to dispose of certain holdings in timberland on the Pacific Coast, and the day the *Hesperus* went around the Horn, Bowers passed the word for a few of us to get ready to move to San Francisco.

"He knew she would have to wait here a long time. As a matter of fact, I think

Digitized by Google

Bowers has something on one of the men with whom Summers is trying to do business, and he is making that fellow hold up the deal. That's only a guess—but I know his methods.

"I had a girl in New York. We weren't married—but that was all right. I was on the square with her. Bowers saw her the afternoon I left for San Francisco. That night he went to my room—I didn't hear about it till he came. He told me himself."

Lloyd did not speak of it calmly. He called Bowers fearful names; but at that I don't suppose he was unjust.

"And she?" I asked.

"Killed herself," he said.

"And Bowers is still alive," I said ironically, driving home the insinuation.

He dropped his head.

"He must have known you pretty well," I went on, "to tell you himself, and no doubt he told it gloatingly. Didn't he?"

Lloyd dropped his head farther in what seemed to be a gesture of agreement.

"And what did you do?" I asked.

"I swore I would kill him!"

"But not so any one could hear you," I said.

"You don't know Bowers."

"No," I replied. "But he seems to know the men he gets to do his dirty work. You are willing to kill him—but you want to be paid for it? Isn't that so?"

"I want enough to get out of the country and be comfortable," he answered as though he was asking only what he had a right to expect.

"Enough," I said, "so you can get another girl—and keep her till some other man drives her to suicide. Then you'll kill him—if you are paid for it, eh?"

HE MADE a quick, convulsive start as though to leap at me. I was not caught off guard. I drove the muzzle of the automatic sharply against his stomach and said:

"Be careful, be careful. Remember all I need to do is press the trigger and then throw you overboard, and I'm done with you. Then tomorrow morning some fisherman will pick you up as a mystery for the papers."

For some reason that I shall not try to explain, I suddenly felt a hatred for Bowers more personal, more exacting, more intense, because of the unknown girl who had killed herself than for all the dangers with which he had surrounded the people on the *Hesperus*.

But Bowers, I said to myself, must be a wonderful judge of human nature to be able to pick out men like Summers and Lloyd, the very worst kind of cravens—or else, I added as an afterthought, he must have a fearful personality, to so crush and intimidate these men.

I did not know just what to do with Lloyd. I would no more have considered telling him the truth about myself, or letting him suspect that I was not ready to sell out Summers, than I would have considered letting him put a gun to my head. I didn't in the least trust him. I felt that he was the sort of a fellow who would betray anybody, though he had reason enough to be false to Bowers. The fact that he had neglected so long to take vengeance on the ruffian showed the sort of man he was.

"What kind of a proposition," I asked, "have you to offer Summers, and why couldn't you write it out?"

"I don't know why I should tell—" but he caught sight of the automatic which I held up significantly when I saw the attitude he was taking. "Summers never liked me, and I knew if he knew who it was that wanted to see him that he wouldn't let me come on board. I went out to the yacht one night, but there was a man at the gangway, and he wouldn't let me land or even talk to me, or call anybody. Your steward told me there was always a man on watch. And I couldn't write out what I wanted to say because—well, because that sort of thing is dangerous."

"Supposing," I asked, "Summers offers you ten thousand dollars? What will you do?"

"Take more than that," he said quickly. "Won't I be saving him at least a half-million?"

"How will you save it?" I asked.

"Put a time-bomb in the old shack Bowers rented."

He said it glibly and easily as though it was nothing to blow up a man.

"What house?" I asked.

"An old shack over there," he pointed vaguely into the darkness. "I don't know just where it is—I mean just the location. I was out there yesterday. It's down by the water and no other houses are near it."

"What's he going to do there?" I asked.

Digitized by Google

"I don't know."

I can't tell just what it was, but something in his manner, in his tone, in his way of looking at me, began to make me think Lloyd was playing a deeper game than I gave him credit for. His story didn't ring true. The more I thought it over the more I was suspicious. I am very suspicious anyway—of people I don't like. But I thought it might be well to talk a while longer.

"Are you an expert with bombs?" I asked.

"Not an expert. I've made a few."

"Did you make the one they found moored to the *Hesperus* some time ago?"

"Not much," he said quickly. "That didn't go off. That was at Newport. Bowers sent another fellow down to attend to that job."

"Why did Bowers send you out to the *Hesperus* tonight to tell Summers the cock-and-bull story you have just been telling me?"

Lloyd either was, or pretended to be, too amazed to speak for some moments, then he asked.

"What do you mean?"

"I mean," I said, "that I think you are a —— liar. You very nearly had me when you told that story of the girl killing herself because of Bowers——"

"That is true, so help me God!" he said passionately.

"Then she cared more for you than you did for her."

"Oh well," he said, as though he could not be responsible for all the women affected by his personal charms, "she was crazy about me."

I seldom become intensely angry. But I was then. I was angry for a number of reasons, none of which was very clear in my mind. I was angry at his attitude about the girl, and I was more angry because I knew that he had in some way been lying to me—and had very nearly succeeded in hoodwinking me.

I never struck a man before—or since—when he was unarmed and I was. But I hit him a sharp blow with the back of my hand on the mouth, and I said that if he didn't "come clean" with every fact and truth inside of his head and do it in a hurry that I would bat him over the head with the gun, and that when he recovered consciousness he would be bound and gagged and lying at the end of some tule swamp up the bay.

"What—what do you want to know?" he stammered.

"I want to know what your game is. You say that this—this well, we'll call it this tragedy took place in your room the night you started for San Francisco. That was much over a month ago—nearly two months at least. But you wait all this time to get Summers to hire you to kill Bowers.

"Now, Lloyd, you are a pretty low dog, I know, but I'll be ——, sir, if I believe that even you are such a cur as to have to have somebody hire you to kill the man that did what you claim Bowers did. Now you explain it and do it quick."

He was frightened and he had cause to be. I felt that I was trapped or very nearly trapped. I have always made it a rule to be exceedingly suspicious of all things that do not appeal to me as reasonable. I knew, even then, much about men and what is called psychology; and I always have been rather astute in dectecting when a man was lying.

But I wasn't sure that he was lying—except that there was much incredible about his whole story. It fitted together after a manner—but there was something wrong with it.

"What about that girl," I snapped, "did she kill herself?"

"She did! Surely did!"

He meant it—or if he didn't, he was too good a liar for me to catch.

"Well, go on." I said.

"It was this way. I'll tell you just how it was. I don't see what cause you've got to be so excited about it, it was none of your business and ——"

"Leave me out of it. Talk about yourself and get to the point," I interrupted.

"Bowers thinks he's a lady-killer. He is—but the other way. I didn't know this kid would do anything like that—kill herself, understand. I liked her and all that, and I took good care of her. Well, Bowers saw her the afternoon I left. He told me I was a lucky man and said she'd probably be lonesome while I was away. I said, 'Bowers, you can try it if you want to—but she'll turn you down. I'll bet money on it.'

"We made a bet. I forgot, or didn't think about his having a key to my room.

Digitized by Google

Well, he used it. That's all. He told me about it when he came out here about ten days ago."

"But you really didn't care," I said.

"I did. I was sorry for the kid. I didn't know she felt that way about me."

"And you paid the bet?" I asked smoothly so as not to alarm him.

"Yes, I paid. It wasn't strictly won, you know—but Bowers seemed to think it was. He said that was the only way to win a woman."

"So you really don't want to kill Bowers?" I asked, still speaking smoothly, confidentially, encouragingly.

"God! You got me that time"—and he laughed. He appeared relieved, too.

"You very nearly had me," I said friendly.

"Of course I don't want to kill him! But I've got to make Summers think I do. And say, the way you've put me through the third degree won't do you any harm when I tell Bowers about it. You're a wonder, old man. But I'll tell you now, look out for Black Jeff. He certainly is after you."

And I was more mystified than ever. I was almost bewildered. I couldn't make head or tail of the situation. I could not see what he hoped to gain by going on board the *Hesperus* and telling Summers that he would blow up Bowers for a sum of money; but I was certain that this time he was telling more of the truth than he had before.

"Why do you have to make Summers think it?" I asked.

"That's not on the schedule for me to tell."

My position was more difficult than ever now, for he was taking it for granted that we understood each other at last. He even told me that I might as well put that thing up—meaning the automatic. And I put it away—but, unremarked by him, I kept my left hand in my left coat pocket where the other automatic, which he had not seen, rested snugly.

THERE was a situation that addled my wits. I didn't know what to make of it. I didn't know what to think of Lloyd or which part of either of his stories to believe.

"Did Bowers coach you in what to say?" I asked.

"Yes."

"And he suggested that you should pretend to be afraid to come on board in the daytime?" I asked further.

"Yes. He coached me all the way through. I didn't expect to meet you. I thought it would be that steward. And Bowers said I might as well use the story about that kid killing herself to string Summers. She really did kill herself. You had me scared within an inch of my life at first—when you flashed that gat. I didn't know what was up."

"I don't know yet," I said. "One minute you pretend to be giving Bowers the double-cross, and the next minute you pretend to be acting for him."

"I'm on the square with you," he insisted. "I had to talk that way about Bowers when I just met you because I wanted you to think I hated him. Part of the game, you know."

"How do I know?" I asked. "You have told me two different stories. Now if you are giving Bowers the double-cross it is natural that you wouldn't want me to know it. And also, you will give me the double-cross the first chance you get——"

"But I am in with you!" he protested. "Bowers planned all this."

"Why?"

"He wanted me to get to Summers, make him a proposition—any kind that looked genuine—only to keep up my rôle I was to hold out for a big sum of money—and then——"

"Yes. And then?"

"And then I was to——"

He stopped. I was very much interested in this plot, for I could not make anything out of it.

"And then I was to send word that Bowers was dead."

He stopped, as though he had told everything.

"I don't understand," I said.

He laughed, and said:

"Don't you see, if he thought Bowers was dead he wouldn't be afraid to come ashore—then we could nab him!"

I did see; and I began to see that Mr. Lloyd was a dangerous gentleman. It was a pretty bright little plan that Bowers had laid so carefully. I did not doubt but that it would have succeeded with Summers; for if Lloyd were permitted to tell his story and give his reasons for wanting to take revenge on Bowers, it was likely that Summers

Digitized by Google

would not question the truth of his story—then if Lloyd sent word that Bowers had been blown up, it was likely that Summers would lose no time in getting ashore to enjoy his release from the *Hesperus*.

He could no doubt buy the other members of the gang off; and it was probable that Bowers only knew just how much money was involved and counted upon the death of Mrs. Summers and Vivian. Bowers wanted, above all else, to get his hands on Summers. As long as Summers evaded him, nothing could be done.

I started up the engine and headed for the *Hesperus*, saying:

"You'll get on board in a few minutes."

But I was troubled. I didn't see any reason why he should be permitted to leave again. If he got ashore it would only mean one more enemy in an already strong camp. Bowers need never know what part I had played in keeping Lloyd on the *Hesperus*, because Bowers, or no one else had expected that I, instead of Westerman, would meet Lloyd at the wharf.

XXII

WE WERE challenged as the launch approached the gangway. The sentry stopped Lloyd at the head of the gangway even though I was with him and said that he could not pass without Mr. Summers's permission. No one was on deck except the sentry, so I went aft myself for Mr. Summers.

I found him in bed with his wife reading to him. It was a placid, wholesome domestic scene and I was sorry to intrude, but I did.

"The gentleman of whom I told you is on board to see you," I said to Mr. Summers.

It was distressing news to him. Mrs. Summers fortunately was looking inquiringly at me, and so did not see the flash of fear that passed across his face.

"Who is the party?" she asked.

"A gentleman that I never saw before who insists upon speaking to Mr. Summers," I said.

"There is no danger?" she asked in alarm.

"Not the least. He is alone, and unarmed. I searched him."

"What does he want?" she insisted.

"That is for Mr. Summers to find out."

"What does he want, Melville? Why, what's the matter? Is your headache worse?" she asked.

"Yes," he said. "I don't know what he wants. Make him tell you, Everhard. I don't want to see him."

"May I act toward him as I see fit?" I asked.

"Yes, yes. Do anything. Say anything," he said, continuing to hold his head as though in pain.

"Give me a written order, will you? One saying that instructions from me are to be carried out."

I was beginning to see how the astute Mr. Lloyd would be noiselessly disposed of.

Mr. Summers scrawled out an order. It was simple and direct and comprehensive: "Do anything Everhard says. Summers."

I returned to the gangway and handed the order to the sentry, who scanned it carefully. Then I took Lloyd aside and I said to him:

"Lloyd, you may be all right, but I can't take chances with you. Summers can't see you tonight, so you will have to stay on board. We have plenty of men in arms here, so one or two will stand watch over you to see that your sleep isn't molested."

"You don't mean—" he began.

"I mean just that. You're a prisoner."

He began to protest and threaten and make a good deal of noise, so I interrupted him, and said——

"Be quiet. Nobody is going to hurt you. But you are out of the game. You don't draw any more cards. I'm afraid you cheat—I can't trust you—and so——"

"But you'll find out tomorrow who I am!"

"No doubt. You've found out tonight who I am. Sentry, take this man forward and lock him up and do it well. Put a guard over him and another guard over the guard. I'll come up forward pretty soon and see if he is locked satisfactorily."

The sentry took hold of Lloyd's arm and started to pull him away. Lloyd glared at me, and then a great light seemed to break upon his mind. He shook his fist under my nose and hissed:

"You—you are the double-crosser!"

What he meant was that I was a "triple-crosser"—that is, that I was not ready to play square with Bowers. It was certain that after Lloyd got any such idea as that in his head, I could not afford to have him turned loose.

I paced up and down the deck for some time thinking over the situation. The

Digitized by Google

thing that had made Lloyd convincing when he first began to talk was the way he had spoken of Bowers. Of course, he had had to speak of Bowers as a rascal of the worst type to make himself convincing; but I was inclined to think that he had told me more of the truth than he realized when he warned me that Bowers would use me and then toss me to one side.

However, there had been nothing else that he could say at the time without revealing at once that he was a Bowers agent instead of a Bowers traitor. All I hoped for was that Bowers would really use me before he undertook to toss me aside.

I didn't see Mr. Summers again that night. After going up to inspect the guard set over Lloyd and finding it satisfactory—and finding him sullen and fiercely silent—I went to bed. I was anxious for the following day to come, as I believed that it would be full of important happenings.

The next morning I had a talk with Summers. It was unsatisfactory. He was nervous. He didn't want to listen. He didn't want to hear anything. I did manage to tell him the name of the man we had as a prisoner, and he put his hands to his ears and cried——

"That dynamiter! We can't keep him here! Don't tell me anything more. I don't want to hear."

I didn't know what to do with such a coward as that.

"We had better keep him here than turn him loose," I said.

But while Summers saw it was better to have an enemy as a prisoner than loose, he didn't seem able to face the idea of keeping the man on board. I never saw such a babyish fellow as Summers, such a flabby coward. There was no talking to him. I wanted to explain why I was going ashore to meet Bowers that day—but it would have been better to talk to a ten-year old child. Whether it was the lack of booze that upset his nerves, or congenital cowardice I don't know. Anyway, I told him nothing except that I was going ashore and that I hoped to bring back good news.

"I'll welcome good news, old man," he said weakly in an effort to joke.

"Well, if you don't hear from me at all you will know it is bad."

"Oh my God, don't talk that way! Don't go ashore then—don't take chances," he protested, apparently panic-stricken at the idea that he might not hear from me again.

So in an effort to cheer him up, I said:

"But you will hear—and it will be good news. Something you can hardly believe."

I said it only as a reaction against the intimation that I might not come back. I never had seen a man so easily depressed as Summers. There was no use talking to him; no use I thought in treating him as a man—he was incapable of facing a situation. So I said nothing more, except that on no condition was he to turn Lloyd loose, and under no circumstances on earth was he to believe anything that Lloyd told him.

"I would never believe him," Summers said nervously. "He's a bad one. I wish he were off this ship!"

"Don't worry about him—or anything else," I said.

Westerman left the *Hesperus* immediately after breakfast. He told every one goodby but myself, and as much as told Mr. and Mrs. Summers that he would have been glad to remain on board, except for myself. I am quite sure that Mrs. Summers sympathized with him. She looked as though she did.

I had some difficulty in avoiding Vivian until Vivian began to understand that I was trying to avoid her, and after that she wouldn't come near me. Then I sought her out and I told her that she entirely misunderstood my attitude; that I was not avoiding her personally, I was only trying to avoid definitely settling the question that vitally concerned both of us.

So after Westerman left, Vivian and I walked up and down the deck for an hour or more, and there was nobody around to hear, and I told her everything that had happened, and just what I expected to do when I went ashore. She thought I had played the game quite cleverly with Lloyd, but expressed herself as much worried by the chances I was taking in meeting Bowers. I had not, of course, told her of the awful pact that Bowers had made with Summers which called for the death of Mrs. Summers. But I told her everything else, including the plan to have Summers marry her sister.

"It's no worse than I feared, Don," she said. "And as for why they should wish to kill me—I don't see. I don't want any of the money. I want only you." Then she added quickly: "Oh, I didn't mean to bring that up. But I am worried about

Digitized by Google

you—and I am very proud that you have trusted me—have told me all that you have. And now, Don, you are going into dangers. I know it will be dangerous. I know you. And I don't want to speak of this—not after what you said—but I want you to know Don.

"We may never meet again. I want you to know that I never told any man I loved him after I met you! You don't believe it. But it is true. A lot of them thought that I loved them—and I let them think it. But Don, I never used the word. It's only a small thing—but I wanted you to know. And other things, Don—well, they were not as you have thought. I can't explain. I won't try.

"It was because I loved you that I wanted to torture you. You can't understand that—no more than I can understand your not blaming me for things—things I really never did, but tried to make you think I did!"

I said nothing. It was all quite incomprehensible. Beside there was no time for further talk. It was past noon. The launch was brought around, and this time I did not undertake to play engineer myself. I shook hands with Vivian when I left, but no one else, except the sentry, was on deck.

"God protect you," she said earnestly.

It was a strange thing for Vivian to say. But I felt that she meant it. I felt a bit more confident, too, because she had said it.

XXIII

AFTER I landed I stood for some minutes waiting for some one to approach me. I took particular pains not to appear nervous or ill at ease, and I did not scan the face of any one that came near, but did my best to appear merely a casual visitor on the water-front. I knew very well that I was being watched and closely; and I suspected that Bowers was suspicious that I might have friends around who would try to spot and follow his agents.

But at last I grew tired of staring out at the water and following the flight of seagulls, so I turned and strolled toward the Ferry building. I again walked leisurely around as though all the time in the calendar was at my command. Once a man brushed roughly by me and went on without turning around, but I didn't follow him. I suppose it was an accident as I never saw him again.

Again I grew tired of waiting, for over an hour had passed. And I started up Market Street. I had gone three blocks, or about that, when a man stepped up and asked me the correct time. At once I recognized his voice as that of the party who had talked abusively over the telephone.

I told him the time and started on.

He fell into step beside me and began talking about the city, about the wide streets, the traffic, the weather; and I answered him as the occasion seemed to require. We must have walked together for some fifteen minutes when he suggested that we return. I said all right, and we started back, and walked together until we came to the Ferry building.

Then suddenly he turned toward me and said:

"All right, Everhard. We are now sure that you haven't anybody trying to spot us."

I suppose some confederate that had been watching closely had signalled to him. Bowers greatly underestimated my cautious nature if he though I would try to have myself followed when I knew that his agents would be watching; and perhaps he had not deduced from what he learned of my record that for the most part I played a lone hand.

One often needs assistance, but as long as one trusts nobody there is no danger of being betrayed. And more men fail through betrayal than through their own weaknesses.

My companion was a thick-set man with coarse, but not badly formed features, and he spoke with a certain ungrammatical, slangy, rough fashion that made his voice one easy to remember. He wore a rough, wide cap and a brown, ready-made suit. I afterward learned that his name was Ralph—whether his Christian or family-name, I do not know—and that he was the chauffeur who had driven Robert Rublee to his death.

Having been assured that I was not trying to have myself followed he made no effort to conceal the route he was taking or to confuse me. He called a taxi, and I believe he took the first one that was convenient, and gave instructions, but we got out some distance before we reached the house to which he was taking me.

Lloyd had very nearly told the truth when he called the house a shack. It was somewhat isolated, and it was not two hundred

Digitized by Google

feet from the water. From the outside it appeared deserted. I noticed that a walk led from the house to the water, and there was a dilapidated, small pier to which was moored a launch, a big launch, almost as large as a small tug. It was more like a tug too.

The house was a one-story frame, and the roof sagged. The windows had been broken, and over one window boards had been nailed. I judged that it contained not more than three rooms, and from the outside it appeared that no one, unless tramps, had used it for months, if not years. There wasn't another house within a quarter of a mile, and the other houses were shacks and there were very few of them.

Ralph volunteered the information that this part of the city had been a fishing colony of Chinese until the "trust" had organized the market and put the "independent" Orientals out of business. Perhaps he made up the explanation for my benefit. I never investigated, as I soon had other things to occupy my attention. Certainly it was a lonesome spot.

We approached the house and stepped up to a door that seemed to hang by one hinge. A panel had been knocked out, and this was boarded. He knocked. I was sure that I heard footsteps softly moving about and thought I heard whispers. But Ralph said:

"Jeff must be asleep." He knocked again.

Of course it seemed very odd to me that he should stand on ceremony in entering such a dump. But I made no remarks. I slipped my hands into my coat pockets and looked out at the bay and wondered about that launch.

A heavy voice, more like a bear's growl than a human's speech, called:

"Come in."

Ralph kicked the door open and stepped back for me to enter.

"After you," I said.

I had no intention of letting any one get behind me—not if I could help it. It is much easier to whack a man over the head from behind than from the front; and when I get whacked I want a chance to register a protest.

He looked at me keenly, understanding perfectly well what was in my mind, and said:

"Nothing like that."

"I'm glad to hear it," I said; but I waited for him to go first and he did at once.

We entered a larger room than I expected to find, and this made me think that perhaps there was but one other room in the house.

Black Jeff, with his left arm in a sling, was sitting on a backless chair and lounging against a rough, kitchen table that stood almost against the wall at the other side of the room. With his right hand he was fumbling with a pack of cards. I noticed at once that they were new.

There was no furniture in the room except the table and two chairs, neither of which had backs, and an old box. Two lanterns stood in a corner.

The house was neither plastered nor papered, and the rafters showed. The partition that ran the full length was less than seven feet high, and I noticed a piece of paper protruding from a knot-hole in the door that opened into the room made by the partition. I had suspected that some one was on the other side of the partition; perhaps several people. As soon as I noticed that piece of paper, I was sure of it. The paper was the small end of a funnel, and there was no doubt but that somebody had an ear to the other end.

Black Jeff was a huge fellow, and I was not sorry that dum-dum bullets were in the magazine of both automatics. The ordinary bullet is deadly, but only a dum-dum will stop a burly man at close quarters. It is speaking moderately to call Jeff "burly."

He was more like monstrous. He was obviously a negro, but not a full-blooded negro, and his features were not the flat, thick negroid features. But he looked wickedly, particularly at me. He wore a black, slouch hat pulled low on one side, and his thick, blue, woolen shirt was open at the throat.

"Here is Everhard," Ralph said as I stepped in after him.

Jeff glared at me steadily for some seconds. He was obviously trying to scare me. He never moved an inch, but leaning across the table fastened those gleaming dark eyes on my face and stared. I did not take my eyes from his, nor did I move an inch.

"So you're the —— —— —— that broke my shoulder!" he said at last, curling back his lips in a kind of mirthless grin that showed most horribly his big white teeth.

Digitized by Google

"Did you bring me here to finish our little misunderstanding?" I asked softly.

He glared at me even more fiercely, and his right hand crept down toward his belt.

I SLIPPED the safety-catch down on an automatic and waited. I began to think that maybe he and Ralph had trapped me in this forlorn spot for the purpose of making good the threat that had been conveyed on the telephone. Then I remembered that Lloyd had said Bowers was looking up my record; and I was quite sure that Bowers would not let even Jeff have revenge until all the use possible had been made of me.

But that big negro came near dying on the spot when his right hand came into view again; it held a long, bright, deadly knife. If he had made even the slightest gesture as though to throw it, I would have shot.

"Jeff," Ralph said nervously, "don't you think we better talk over things with Everhard."

Jeff glowered at me a few seconds longer, then threw down the knife and stood up, with a roar of laughter.

"By God, you've got nerve," he said to me. "I wanted to try you out. You know, we can't take chances with any timid fellows."

He pretended that he was quite ready to be friendly. No doubt he had been, as he said, trying me out to test my nerves; but it was quite evident to me that he put much more feeling and enthusiasm in his threatening attitude than he did in his friendly attitude.

I extended my thumbs over the edge of my pockets and drew the coat closer around me. I had to keep my hands in my pockets while I was standing so that the sagging due to the automatics would not be so noticeable, and no one would be so likely to suspect what the pockets contained. The exposed thumbs, however, would tend to throw even a suspicious person somewhat off guard.

In reply to him I said quietly:

"I am ready to talk business."

"With me?" he asked.

His voice was powerful, and I spoke very softly. No doubt it was a strange contrast to whomever was listening.

"If you are the one in authority," I answered.

"Well what do you want?" he asked truculently.

"Money, of course," I said bluntly.

"Won't you sit down?" Ralph asked, kicking the other chair a little toward me.

Ralph seemed somewhat impressed by my manner. He knew at least that I was not frightened—and I was quite sure that he himself was a bit afraid of the huge negro.

"No," I said. "I'll stand until I see whether there is any use of my remaining here."

Neither Jeff nor Ralph, nor whoever was listening on the other side of the partition knew that I knew who was the head of their gang—that I had heard of Bowers; so I was a little afraid that Jeff would try to make me think that he was the head.

Jeff, in his rôle of "chief," was rather awkward. He was not a fluent negotiator. He asked how much money I wanted.

"That depends," I said, "on what you want me to do."

"What are you willing to do?" he asked.

I felt that he had been coached somewhat as to the questions he should ask.

I said:

"Anything that I am paid well enough for."

"How much do you want?" and then, as though remembering that he had asked that question, he went on, "how much is Summers paying you?"

"We haven't agreed on a sum. He said he would make it worth my while. That is too vague. I look out for myself. Besides, I think it would be safer to kick in with you people."

Both Jeff and Ralph laughed and looked significantly at each other.

"You don't make any bones about saying so, do you?" Ralph said.

The door in the partition opened, and Bowers came in; or rather he stood in the doorway looking me over before he came in.

I knew at once that it was Bowers. I had been given a fair description of him. But there was much about the man that no description could convey. He was short and stocky, with a big head and big shoulders; but it was the man's face, and not his body, that held the attention. It was an intelligent face—more than merely intelligent, it was sensual, satanic; but expressive of power rather than cunning.

Digitized by Google

His lips were coarse, thick and firm; his nose was long and arched in a way that was suggestive of an eagle's beak; his eyes were dark, small and brilliant, and were overshadowed by thick brows.

"Do you know who I am?" he snapped at me.

"Yes," I said.

"Who am I?"

"The chief—no matter what your name is," I answered.

It was an answer that pleased him. He came on into the room and with a gesture and a careless "get out," like a master speaking to dogs, sent Jeff and Ralph into the next room.

"Sit down," he said to me.

I thanked him and sat down. He took the chair that Jeff had had.

"So you knew I was the chief the minute you saw me?" he asked again.

"Yes," I said.

"Well, Everhard, Jeff thought he could scare you out of your wits. I was willing for him to try. Men who work for me have to have steady nerves."

He riffled the cards carelessly and then laid them aside. I said nothing.

"Tell me," he said suddenly, savagely, as though testing my nerves again, "what did you fellows do with Lloyd last night."

"I locked him up," I said promptly. "He came aboard with a proposition to give you the double-cross. He didn't get to see Summers at all. I thought he might queer our game if he was loose, so I put him under guard."

Bowers looked at me keenly for a moment then broke into a laugh. It was a wicked laugh, with some mirth in it and much menace.

"You played the devil all right. I sent him on board. I wanted him to see Summers and——"

"That's what he said—afterward. But he knew then who I was and that I was trying to get in touch with you. I couldn't afford to let him see Summers."

"Summers trusts you?" Bowers asked, lowering his voice.

"Yes," I said.

"You met him by accident—the night you shot Jeff?"

"Yes."

"But he trusts you?"

Bowers seemed eager to be assured that he did trust me."

"He does. Absolutely."

"Did he tell you—everything?"

"He did," I said, looking hard into his eyes. "Everything. That's why I am here now. I want to put up my ante and get a chance at the pot."

"Just what do you mean by putting up your 'ante'?" Bowers asked.

"I am willing to do my share."

"You are willing to go the limit?"

"Absolutely," I said.

"You have a reputation of being cold-blooded. Are you willing to cut a woman's throat—while she sleeps?"

He put the horrible question in a ghastly way and grinned as he asked it. He was trying to see if I was cold-blooded, I suppose. I don't believe that I batted an eyelid. I looked at him in silence for a moment and then said:

"Yes."

The answer and my manner of making it surprised him. He showed a flicker of surprise in his bright, dark eyes.

I had no more hesitancy in lying to him than, as a hunter, I would have had in covering myself with a bearskin so as to get closer to the bears that I wanted to shoot. But if I had cared as little for murder as I was trying to make him think I did, I would have shot him on the spot and potted Jeff and Ralph when they rushed out to investigate.

I was soon to be put to the test.

Bowers asked how much I wanted for my share, and I said not less than a hundred thousand.

"Playing for high stakes, aren't you?" he said coldly.

"I can do something to delay your winning if I don't get it," I answered boldly, at the same time putting my thumbs back inside my pockets.

"How did Summers come to tell you the whole story?"

He was speaking roughly to me and his manner was aggressive.

"Drunk," I said. "I got it out of him then."

"And if I don't make a bargain with you—" he stopped significantly.

I hesitated to answer. I saw that I was in a tight place, so I looked squarely into his eyes and thought hard. Then I said—

"If anything should happen to Summers your game would blow up. If he dies——"

I paused to let that sink in.

Digitized by Google

WHILE I paused I caught a glint of metal at a knot-hole in the partition and judged that a gun was aimed through at my head, ready to be fired at a signal from Bowers, so I added:

"And I am not such a dunce as to put myself in your hands without making certain arrangements that will severely handicap you if anything happens to me. I have a pal on board the *Hesperus* and if I do not return by midnight, Summers will drink strychnine with his next glass of whisky after that."

"So that's why you're so —— sure of yourself!" he exploded. "I knew there was something up. You act like a man that had four aces up his sleeve. Strychnine, eh? Pretty smart. Well, we'll see if we can't shake your nerves Mr. Ever-hard."

He sneered at my name.

I said nothing. I made no sign.

Then he laughed; and it was like the laugh of a man who has a straight flush up his sleeve when he knows the other fellow has only four aces hid away.

"Jeff," he called, "bring out the prisoner."

He called merrily, and Jeff answered merrily, as though it were a good joke on me.

I stood up quickly and wheeled so that my back was against the wall.

Jeff, grinning so that his huge white teeth glowed in his face like the mouth of a jack o' lantern, came in carrying easily a bound body in his arms, and he dumped at my feet the body of Claude Westerman.

It was a fearful surprise.

Westerman's hands and feet were tied, and he was pale with terror. I could not imagine how they had got hold of him. Certainly there were depths within depths to Bowers's ingenuity.

"Everhard," Bowers said, coming forward, and he stepped with ease for a short man of his bulk, "you don't trust me and I don't trust you. Ralph is behind that partition with a shot-gun at the knot-hole about on a level with your stomach. Ralph, poke it through and show the gentleman."

At the word a sinister barrel came through for three or four inches.

"Now then," Bowers went on, "you have to show me that you have the nerve. This poor fool here came ashore this morning and Ralph got into conversation with him about you. We wanted to find out what had happened to Lloyd. This chump said he was suspicious of you and was going right up to the police station to get men detailed to have you watched—that he didn't trust you.

"That was a pretty good recommend for you to us, so we took care he shouldn't tell his troubles to the police. Now Everhard, I've met a lot of men and they have done good work for me, but I have never found but one that didn't shy at cold-blooded murder. Jeff here would cut throats all day long; and you have to show me that you weren't bluffing when you said you would cut Mrs. Summers's throat—for a hundred thousand."

He paused dramatically. I made no reply. Then he went on:

"Over there is a door in the floor opening to a cellar. Pull the door up, Jeff."

Jeff walked to the other end of the room and raised a door near where the lanterns stood.

"Now then," Bowers went on, "here is a knife. Cut that fool's throat and dump him into the cellar."

Bowers drew a knife and threw it on the floor.

Westerman was almost unconscious with terror. His mouth was open and he breathed as though in his death agony, while his big blue eyes were glazed with horror. But as the knife fell with a sinister clatter, he began to sob and scream and writhe, begging for his life and trying to pray.

Jeff leaned against the partition with his arms folded, and carelessly looked on.

Bowers stood by the table, expectant.

Neither got between me and the knot-hole from which the muzzle of the shotgun protruded.

Perhaps my face did grow a bit pale, but I do not believe a muscle quivered. At least I was doing everything in my power to suppress any sign whatever of emotion.

"Yes," I said, kicking the body at my feet, "you spied on me and made all the trouble you could for me on the *Hesperus*, didn't you? This is where you get yours!"

I said it coldly. I tried to say it as though I meant it, and without any of the actor's intonation.

Jeff continued to lounge against the partition, grinning, and with arms folded.

Bowers, searching my face with his fierce eyes, continued to stand expectantly by the table.

Digitized by Google

Westerman writhed and screamed and sobbed and prayed in an ecstasy of terror.

I took my hands from my coat pockets and hoped that my sagging pockets would not be noticed. I stooped and picked up the knife and ran its edge across my thumb-nail. The edge was like a razor's. I reached into my hip pocket and brought out two handkerchiefs and while pretending to wipe my hands, I wadded them into a tight ball.

I knew I would have to act quickly. I knew that it would be impossible for me to say a warning word to Westerman.

I looked toward Bowers and said:

"I'm glad you consider this a test of my nerve, for as a matter of fact it is something that I shall enjoy doing and it will all be over very quickly."

Then I roughly grabbed Westerman by the coat at the shoulder and dragged him across the floor to the end of the open door in the floor. I bent over him so that my back was toward Bowers and Jeff and the man at the knot-hole, and they could not see Westerman's face. I lifted the knife before his eyes, and at the sight of it he began screaming louder than ever, opening his mouth as wide as he could.

I struck—and buried the knife in the fleshy part of his arm, and with my left hand I desperately wadded and crammed the handkerchiefs into his open mouth. The gurgling breath, spluttering as it struggled against the gag, was something like the strangulation of a man with his throat cut. The knife was bloodied by the thrust into his shoulder, and I tossed it carelessly over my shoulder and at the same time, roughly tumbled Westerman's wounded, but practically unharmed body into the cellar.

I was confident that he would have sense enough not to work the gag out and then make a noise.

It was all over in a very few seconds. Jeff had left the partition and was leaning to one side trying to see and Bowers had taken a step forward, when I stood up.

"How's that for a neat job?" I asked quietly in an even voice. "You see, I didn't mess things up a bit."

Jeff chuckled and grinned at me in admiration, as though he recognized in me a brother butcher.

Bowers stared hard into my face for a moment as though unable to believe what he had seen—or thought he had—and had heard. Then he said:

"You win. By God, you are a cold-blooded devil. I'll admit I thought you were a little cocky in taking that name 'Everhard'—but I guess you have a right to it. A hundred thousand, eh? Well, it's yours. But this will be about all for today.

"Jeff, drop that door. Mr. Everhard and I are going up-town now."

He walked out of the door ahead of me without another word. It was very abrupt. I glanced back and toward the knot-hole. The barrel still protruded. I was helpless. But at least, I thought, they would not investigate to see if Westerman's throat were really cut, and if his neck had not been broken by the fall, there would be time later to get him out.

I walked after Bowers.

XXIV

WE WENT some distance in silence, and Bowers strode on rapidly without looking around at me. I easily kept up with him; that is, I easily kept about one pace back and to the side, and I looked closely at him.

He was a bulldog of a man in build, with a thick neck and a massive jaw. His face was sensual, bestial, but it was far from being a stupid face. It was that of a man who would do anything to carry out his purpose. In most evil faces there are pronounced lines of weakness—undefended trenches, as it were, that one can steal into and enfilade the man. I have often said that were it not for the fact that evil men are susceptible to women and whisky, they would soon crowd all the good men off the earth.

The evil men are much more resourceful, much more ruthless, much more forceful than the good—and if it were not for their weaknesses which lay them by the heels sooner or later, they would have the honorable and decent fellows at such a disadvantage that the decent fellows would have to put on the livery of the devil to save themselves from extermination.

As I searched Bowers's profile I wondered if he were not one of those monstrosities that have no beguiling weaknesses. He was sensual—yes. Extremely so. That was as plain on his face as though it were

Digitized by Google

placarded in large red letters. But he was hardly the kind of a man to linger in Delilah's arms when he had work to do.

He seemed busy with his own thoughts, and I walked on with him. I did not try to imagine what he wanted with me, and I would not ask him. He was thinking intently, and I felt that he was trying to think what to do with me.

Perhaps not. But I am quite sure that I was very much on his mind at that time; and I wondered if it had not disturbed him a little to find that I was cold-blooded enough to cut a man's throat and do it cheerfully. He was too shrewd a man not to think that I might some time as cheerfully cut his own. But he had put me into a situation where I could not wisely refuse to play the part I had played.

I judged that he was making toward a car line; and in time this proved true. We had to walk about a mile and a half to get to one, and though he walked rapidly, he did not puff. By that, I knew that he, like myself, did not drink—so there was another weakness eliminated.

We had almost reached the car line when he turned on me and said angrily:

"You did a —— of a trick in locking Lloyd up!"

I understood perfectly what he was up to. He was no doubt exasperated that I should have spoiled the plan he had; but he was deliberately trying to bully me.

I did not consider it my rôle to be bullied. I knew that he would resent having me treat myself as his equal, but I was in no mood, not even for the sake of discretion, to be the least bit humble. No doubt I am a bit vain, but so far I have been able to keep my eyes steady and my head up in the presence of any man I have ever met.

So when he said angrily, "You did a —— of a trick in locking Lloyd up!" and glowered at me, I stopped and looked at him; and I meant everything that he may have read in my eyes. And I said—

"I don't like to be addressed in that tone of voice—not by anybody."

Then he looked hard at me for some seconds and his face grew red with hot blood, and in a tone of amazement he said:

"What in ——?"

"Just that," I said.

He changed his attitude abruptly and a cunning light showed in his eyes, so I knew what I had expected to find, that is, that he was something of a bully. I had thought that he was what is called among certain men "hard." There is a distinction between being "hard" and being "bad" and "dangerous." Bowers was not "hard." He did not hesitate a moment, when he saw that I had challenged him, to pretend that he had not meant anything by the way he had spoken. A really "hard" man would have died before he would have backed down even that small degree.

Bowers then explained that Lloyd's being locked up had seriously disarranged his plans. I said that I was as good a man as Lloyd and that I would go through with any work intended for him.

"There's nothing. Nothing at all. Just wait. Be patient. I'll have something for you this evening."

Then he added suddenly, with the confidential insinuation in his voice that men always use in speaking of such matters.

"How would you like to meet a cute little blonde tonight?"

I could tell that he wanted me to meet the "cute little blonde," so I thought my cue was to say yes. So I did.

"Fine. Fine. You don't have to be back on board the *Hesperus* until midnight, do you? A —— of an arrangement that was you made anyway. Beats you out of a good night's fun. Gerty's a charmer. She'll make you forget your troubles."

After a few minutes more of such talk, he became silent again; and he said nothing more than a word now and then until after we had caught a car and ridden into the city.

I knew San Francisco pretty well, and moreover I have a fair sense of direction. I have always been able to get around rather well without asking questions of strangers.

Certainly, Westerman had claims on me. I was determined to get him out and get him out as soon as I could. I liked the boy. He had bungled in suspecting me, but having suspected me, he had done right in planning to have the police watch me. He was a clean, honest, decent boy, and I was deeply sorry for the wound I had made in his arm.

It was almost dark by the time we got down into the city, and I planned to go back out there just as soon as I could get away from Bowers.

Digitized by Google

I had plenty of time to think as we rode in. And as subsequent events showed, I thought in a straight line; that is, I knew that he wanted to get rid of me, and as he knew most men were susceptible to women —he made a mistake, however, in thinking that I like blondes—he thought the best thing would be to turn me over to Gerty. And I figured that she would have private instructions to hold me at least until close to midnight, perhaps to get me drunk.

He thought that I would not dare tie her up and gag her to get away, because then she would tell how it happened, and I would be out of favor and under suspicion the next day. I had no way of knowing what rapid sequence of strange, dramatic, almost incredible events were to take place before morning.

But I made ready for Gerty. When we got off the car, I said I would have to have some soda mints, and he said that he had to use the telephone. So we went to a drug store, where he entered a booth. I suppose he watched me, or tried to. I acted on that theory anyway, knowing that in his place I would have watched. So I asked for soda mints—and I complained that the ones offered me were not the kind I was used to; and surreptitiously I slipped the clerk five dollars, told him I wanted chloral and that he could keep the change.

He was a wise clerk. I have no doubt that he divided the gold piece with one of the clerks behind the prescription counter, but anyway in a remarkably short time he gave me a small vial of chloral—and my soda mints.

Bowers, however, was really telephoning. When he came out of the booth he told me, with a suggestive wink, that he had been telephoning Gerty and that I was to meet her at once and take her to dinner.

"And you?" I asked, as though I was sorry to miss his company.

"Oh I have an engagement. I'll see you later. First I'll take you over and introduce you."

He took me to an apartment house and I was introduced to Gerty. She was waiting for us, and ready to go out to dinner. He patted her cheeks familiarly, and told her what an elegant sport I was, and she looked at him coyly and tried to look shyly at me.

I suppose she was what is called pretty. Bowers was too wise a rascal to try to hold a man with anything but the most beautiful of women. But unfortunately for his well-laid plans, I have never been fascinated but by one woman. She was a blazing brunette, and there are no other women like Vivian.

I have particularly disliked the sweet, pink and cream, baby-faced blondes; and no doubt Gerty thought me a veritable stick of a man, for after Bowers had left us alone, I made no move to put my arm around her or to kiss her. I simply said:

"All right. Where do you want to go for dinner."

She gave me an innocent stare and a shy smile and replied in a half-lisping babyish voice that she didn't care.

So I called a taxi and took her to a place that I knew well. It was expensive enough to satisfy her sybaritic spirit, odorous enough as to reputation to be spoken of as "gay," and offered private dining-rooms. We had one.

I managed to have a private word with the waiter; and that private word conveyed to him the fact that when I ordered whisky high-balls, that meant plain ginger ale and if he put so much as a drop of whisky in any one of my glasses that I would scalp him. With the help of a five-dollar gold piece he understood perfectly.

A private dining-room with such a person as Gerty is the most uncomfortable place imaginable. I thought that I had to be half-way decent to her so that she would give Bowers a favorable report, because I expected that she would have a tale of woe to tell him anyway.

So when she climbed on to my lap, I didn't throw her off. I explained to her that I abominated cocktails and drank nothing but high-balls. She giggled and said that she used to know a man like that, that he was a fine fellow and got drunk faster than any man she ever met.

I made the usual fool boast of the drinking man, that I could drink a lot without it showing. She said that she could too.

So she had a cocktail and I had a high-ball.

I dared her to drink a cocktail to every high-ball that I took.

I could go into detail and explain what happened with every course—only when dinner was half over, Miss Gerty went to sleep after becoming a bit maudlin.

I got a taxi and put her into it. I got several bottles of various kinds of liquors, including two or three empty champagne

Digitized by Google

bottles, and an empty whisky bottle. Then I took her to her apartment. Of course she was unconscious.

In her apartment I deliberately set to work to make it look as if we had held a grand orgy. I brought out wine-glasses and broke two; I burned cigarets and scattered the ashes; I poured some wine into the sink and some on the floor, and I scattered the bottles around.

Altogether I spent about two hours, including the dinner of course, with Gerty. I touseled her hair and mashed her hat and spilled wine on her waist and dress.

When she awoke she would have every reason to believe that I had done my share of the drinking and she would have no reason for believing that "knockout drops" had been administered at the dinner. The only explanation that she could make to Bowers would be that I had drunk more than she thought it possible for any man to do.

XXV

I HAD hoped that I would find the shack deserted, and I had rather expected that it would be. I had seen no bedding, stove or anything more than a deck of cards to indicate that any one remained there for any length of time. What may have been in the next room I did not know—except, of course, the shotgun. Whether Bowers used the shotgun as a general precaution or because he had been suspicious of me, I could not tell; but I was inclined to believe he had mounted it at the knot-hole as a precautionary measure.

It was a dark night and a wet fog was coming in—more like mist than fog. It was chilly and I am not a stoic when the weather is cold, so when I dismissed the taxi—having been afraid to let it carry me anywhere near to the house lest some one hear the engine and be on the lookout—I pulled down my hat and turned up my collar.

I had dismissed the taxi over a quarter of a mile from the shack and I began walking rapidly. There was a sort of a path rather than a road, and though one could not see far ahead, the path could be followed with ease.

Suddenly I became aware of a form before me. It seemed to have risen from a clump of dried weeds and the safety of each automatic in my pockets was released.

A flashlight glowed for a moment, the beam on me. I stopped. The man was some fifteen feet away. It was evident that he could not see my face well for at once he said:

"All right, Lloyd. I thought it was you. Better hurry. There's somethin' doin'."

I grunted and walked on past him—but I walked rapidly.

That had been a surprise, indeed. I wondered how many pickets Bowers had scattered about—and why. I did not suppose that he had any others on that path at least; but it made me uncomfortable to know that there was even one man out there in the fog who might possibly cut off my retreat in case anything happened to arouse his suspicion.

Evidently my resemblance to Lloyd was about as close as Westerman had thought; and I had good reason to be glad that Lloyd was thin and slender. Also I was glad for the chilly air which had caused me to turn up my collar and pull down my hat.

All through my life, however, the gods of luck have given me a little more than an even break. They have, now and then, thrown me into an unpleasant hole, but they have never quite deserted me.

Though I went on hastily, my encounter with the stranger in the path made me wary.

As I approached the shack I could neither see a light nor hear voices. But I crept near and found that there was a dim light which, however, did not show to any one approaching by the path, for it was burning in the room on the other side of the house—the room in which I had been interviewed by Bowers. The windows on that side were not boarded.

I could hear voices as I crept around the shack, and they were the voices of men in high spirits; or rather the voice of one man in high spirit: Bowers.

Cautiously I peeked in. I could not take in much at a glance—and I had some difficulty in believing what I saw. The two lanterns I had noticed in the corner were burning on the table, and full in their glare sat Bowers. He was riffling the cards absently, and looking across the room at a bound figure that stood fastened against the wall.

Jeff was behind Bowers, and the negro's teeth showed in a grin that seemed to cover the lower half of his face. His left arm—the one I had injured by a shot that should

Digitized by Google

have been more true; and would be, I promised myself, the next time—was strapped across his chest; but his right was free, and his hand toyed with the long, bright knife which he seemed to regard as a precious and useful talisman.

Bowers, with a cunning which I could then see had not been for my benefit alone, had stood the bound man against the wall and just opposite the knot-hole through which protruded the sinister barrel of the shotgun. But this time I could tell that the shotgun was obviously an instrument of torment rather than of menace. The barrel kept sliding slowing forward and back in a way that made it fearful to face.

I could see the man who stared with fear-stricken eyes at the ominous muzzle, and I could see why he made no outcry. He was gagged. But I could not for some moments believe that it was really the man my eyes told me it was: Melville Summers.

I could not imagine how they had caught him—but in an instant I understood why Bowers had turned me over to that drunken little blonde. He wanted me out of the way until he had the chance to see whether or not his plan—whatever it had been—to get Summers, worked or not. If it had not worked, then no doubt Bowers would have made it a point himself to see that I got back to the *Hesperus* before midnight so that my mythical confederate would not put strychnine in Summers's next glass of whisky.

But with Summers in his hands, Bowers no doubt thought he would have no need for me and would not care to divide any money with a man that was not absolutely needed; and if he could say to me something like, "You were drunk with that blonde just when I needed you. What kind of a fellow are you to expect me to give you a cent?" there would be no adequate answer that I could make.

It was quite plain that he did not need me just then; but I was not drunk, and I thought that he should know it.

I crept cautiously around to the door, then taking a few steps that could be easily heard, I burst through the door and said quickly, as though I thought I was bringing news:

"Summers has gone!"

Jeff crouched as though he were about to spring. I had the impression that the sinister muzzle of that shotgun was moved to cover me, but I did not take my eyes off Bowers's face to look.

Bowers was not pleased to see me; but he was amazed. It was his turn for him not to believe his eyes for a moment.

"What's that?" he said in a voice that made me wonder if after all I was going to be able to fool him.

"Summers has left the *Hesperus*—I didn't know where else to look for you. So I came here."

Bowers was glowering. I did not take my eyes from his face though for an instant he glanced at Summers. Bowers did not seem to be sure that he knew of what I was talking.

"Well, what are you doing here?" he demanded in the tone of one speaking to a tramp that has crept into a banquet hall.

"I came to notify you," I said quietly, "that Summers has left the *Hesperus*."

"I know it," said Bowers coldly, pointing to the figure tied up against the wall behind me.

I turned—and for a moment stood speechless in pretended surprise. I used that moment to think of what it would be best to say next.

Summers's eyes were denunciatory as well as terror-stricken. He accused me in an embittered glance of being to blame for his misery, and I am sure that if he had not been gagged he would have screamed some dreadful tirade at me.

To Bowers I said:

"You are a wonder! I take my hat off to you. So you've got him at last! Well, old sport"—addressing Summers—"how do you like it? You told me Bowers would get you, didn't you? But you didn't expect it quite so soon, eh?"

"How did you know he had left the *Hesperus?*" Bowers asked ominously.

AT ONCE I explained that I had left word with my confederate on board the yacht that if anything came up to get in touch with me through the café to which, I said, I had taken Gerty for dinner. I had taken her there so I could get any message that might have come for me during the afternoon.

Dinner was about half over, I said, when a man came in with the message from my confederate to tell me that Summers had left the yacht. Gerty was flirting with a

Digitized by Google

man at a near-by table, so I turned her over to him and came at once to the shack. I had been compelled to tell that sort of story as the only one that would be the least bit plausible.

Bowers may not have believed it, but at least he could find no defects in it just then. Obviously, Summers had left the yacht; and apparently I had learned of it in the way described.

I feel pretty sure that he did not believe me. He was a wise and cunning fellow, and my story no doubt appeared too plausible; but still he could hardly suspect me of being loyal to Summers. No doubt he thought I was a crafty lone wolf trying to cut in on his game—and he had no further use for me. His plans were working fine that evening.

"So you let another man take her away from you?" he said as though that were something contemptible and only the weakest and most abased of fellows would ever turn over a half-drunken blonde to some one else.

Jeff laughed—laughed as though he could see what would happen to any man who flirted with his girl.

"I had work to do," I explained, "and I couldn't let a woman interfere with business. I wanted to notify you—how did I know that you would catch him? You didn't say anything to me about it."

"I don't advertise my plans in the papers—but I'll tell you now what is coming next. I'm glad you've shown up. I was just getting ready to send for you. Mrs. Summers will be here in a few minutes."

He stopped to see what effect this astounding statement would have on me. So far as he could see it had none. I said:

"Good. That's great."

I wondered by what diabolic ingenuity he had contrived to get both Summers and Mrs. Summers off the *Hesperus*. I wanted to ask what about Vivian—but I thought it best to let him do the talking.

"You know," he went on, "that she has to die. I engaged you to do the job"—I wondered what Summers must have thought of all this—"and your chance has come."

I knew very well that he was lying when he said that he had been ready to send for me when I appeared, and also when he spoke as though I were the only one who could serve him with Mrs. Summers' death.

"Now listen," he went on, "it would be no trick at all to cut her throat and throw her into the bay. But when her body was found the police would know there had been murder—and there would be a big commotion and Summers there might be blamed. But if she is found drowned—well, that can be suicide, see? Get me?

"We'll have the bereaved husband explaining to the reporters that his wife had been in ill-health and acted strangely for some time. Suicide, understand? You and Jeff are to take her out not far from the yacht and hold her under until she strangles. Then when the body is found everybody will think she jumped overboard. Understand?"

I said:

"Yes"—and I did understand perfectly.

I knew that I was not expected to return alive. Alone in the bay with Jeff, my life—unless I was careful—would not be worth a plugged penny.

With Mrs. Summers out of the way, Bowers could have no possible use for me. I would be only an embarrassment to him, a person to be rebuffed from demands for money, or more effectively put out of the way.

"You don't seem very enthusiastic," Bowers said sarcastically, and Jeff laughed.

"You are mistaken," I said. "I am enthusiastic. I think your plan perfect. And as for strangling a woman instead of cutting her throat—it makes no difference to me."

I said it quitely, seriously, looking straight into his bright eyes. I wanted him to believe me; and I wanted him to think I was unsuspicious of him.

"You are a cold-blooded devil," he said as though the last doubt of it was swept from his mind; and he seemed to be impressed. But that meant little to me; for I knew that he was a consummate schemer, and that likely as not he was striking the attitude of admiration—wonderment—at my cold-bloodedness to throw me off my guard, to keep me from being suspicious.

I would have given much to know at that time whether he had that shotgun continually trained in the room while I was in it for my sake or just as a matter of protective policy. Certainly Bowers was a far-seeing man, but he would have needed to be a clairvoyant to know that if given the merest shadow of a chance I

Digitized by Google

would have swept those lanterns to the floor and opened fire; and still he used about the only conceivable precaution that made me unwilling to take the chance.

I could have dodged easily enough, but Summers—bound, gagged and tied to the wall—would probably have been killed at once. He could scarcely have been missed.

Bowers's high spirits, which I had noticed through the window before I came in, seemed to have left him. He sat enigmatically silent, riffling the cards. For a time I stood watching and waiting for him to say something more; then I walked across to Summers and began to taunt him with having been gulled by me.

No one but Summers could see my face, and I tried to convey to him a message of hope even while I mocked him for having been deceived by me. But he did not get my message; or at least did not understand it. He rolled his head from side to side pitifully, and his eyes contained as much suffering as I have ever seen in those of a human.

When I turned my head away, because it was really painful to look at him, I unexpectedly caught a significant glance that passed between Jeff and Bowers, or rather, it was far more than a glance. They were looking intently into each other's eyes and Jeff slowly drew his finger across his throat and Bowers nodded.

XXVI

IF BOWERS had had the slightest suspicion that I was not as faithless and as treacherous to Summers as I pretended to be, that must have been dissipated after Mrs. Summers was brought into the shack. She no sooner saw me than she turned on me and said everything that an outraged and anguished woman can say to a man whom she has instinctively distrusted from the first.

I did not dare do anything but listen to her with as insolent a manner as I could assume.

She had been lured from the ship with the old, but inevitably potent, pretext that her husband had been injured and was dying at the hospital; but long before she had reached the shack, coming under the direction of a man I had never seen before, she became suspicious; and as soon as she saw Mr. Summers bound and gagged against the wall she knew what had happened; and as soon as she saw me, she thought she knew who had made it happen.

If I had not had a well-defined plan, it is likely that I would have taken the risk of the shotgun and made trouble when Bowers began to talk to her. He said that she wasn't as pretty as he thought, or she might be able to have a little influence with him—and other things of the same nature.

I was confident that it was safe to leave Summers in Bowers's hands, because Bowers would not dare put him out of the way until after Mrs. Summers' estate had been settled, and besides, I was more intent on getting her back safely on board the *Hesperus* than I was in saving Summers' neck—though I would have done almost anything to do that, too.

As long as Bowers did not tell her that Summers had married her for money, I didn't think that what he could say would matter much; and perhaps that would not have been believed by her had he said it. But he didn't.

I will not describe the details of that hour, or half-hour or whatever it was. Bowers, with his love of torture, told her that she was to be murdered. He pointed out the muzzle of the shotgun leveled at Summers and told her that at sunrise—though this, I knew, was a palpable lie—Summers would be shot. He said it to torment Summers as much as Mrs. Summers.

After she had flayed me as only an injured and anguished woman can flay a man, Mrs. Summers was more composed. She was in fact heroic; and returned with a sad, calm gaze the gloating smile of Bowers and the hideous grin of the big negro that towered lazily behind him.

"I don't know why you are persecuting me," she said to him, "I don't know why you are persecuting my husband. But I am not afraid to die. I wish only to die with him.

She turned and flung her arms about the bound body and clung to him.

"Tear her away, Jack," Bowers commanded the man who had brought her in.

She resisted, and I and Jeff were instructed to assist.

"Shut her trap," Bowers commanded again, and Jack—who, from his voice, seemed to be enjoying himself, thrust a piece of cloth into her mouth.

Digitized by Google

"Take her away," Bowers commanded again, and Jeff and Jack understood at once what was meant.

The big negro threw his right arm about her, and though she struggled, she was helpless as a doll in the arms of a street gamin. Then he started for the door, and Jack threw down the rope with which he was trying to tie her feet, as it didn't seem necessary when she was held so securely in Jeff's arms. Instead he opened the door. I stood watching them, not knowing exactly what was up.

"Go on with them," Bowers snapped at me. "Don't stand there like a stick."

I turned and looked at him. And I am sure that he felt relieved to think that he would never see me again.

XXVII

IT WAS dark but the fog was not so thick as it had been earlier in the evening. A breeze had come up and it felt as though a rain would follow soon.

Jack and Jeff, bearing the woman between them, stumbled on ahead of me. I made no offer to help, and I had reasons for wishing to be behind them.

It must have been low tide, for the pier stood so high out of the water, I wondered how we would get to it. It was old and broken, and unsafe.

Jack and Jeff seemed to understand each other perfectly; for no word was spoken. Jack stepped into a rowboat, brought out a lantern, lighted it, and climbing up on the pier ran to the far end and hung it from the top of a pile. Obviously that was to be the beacon so they could easily locate the pier when the tug came back.

From the end of the pier he dropped into the tug. In a few minutes we heard the engine, and he called out:

"All right. Come on board."

Jeff waded out to the rowboat, dragging, rather than carrying Mrs. Summers, and I hastily caught up her feet and dresses and followed him so that she would not get wet. It was very disagreeable to have my shoes soaked with mud and water and to have the bottom of my trousers cold and clammy.

The rowboat rocked unsteadily as we climbed in—and I contributed much to its unsteadiness by my persistence in climbing into the stern from which point I was farthest from the big negro who was squatted in the bow. He handed me an oar and I poled the boat some twenty feet to the launch or tug. Then we climbed on board that.

"Fasten it to the pier," Jack commanded me, meaning that I should tie the rowboat to the pier.

"Fasten it yourself," I said from my vantage seat in the stern.

"Go on, fasten that boat," Jeff ordered.

"I'll do nothing of the kind," I replied easily. "I'm not a deck-hand."

Both men swore and muttered. I was intent on making them angry. I knew that if they were angry they would use less finesse in trying to deal with me.

I made further remarks about the unskilful way in which Jack handled his tug, until he said profanely:

"Maybe you'd like to run it for me."

I told him I could give him lessons in the gentle art of navigation; and his response was an oath as he headed straight out into the bay. I could make out the glow of light which I knew was the jeweled pinnacle of the Ferry building—and as long as I could see that I knew that I could keep my bearings.

Jack was at the wheel; Mrs. Summers was lying in the bottom of the boat and I was sitting in the stern, while Jeff stood behind Jack. I watched him closely and could see that Jeff was having difficulty in keeping his eyes off me.

In a few minutes I heard Jack say:

"This is about far enough, ain't it?"

Jeff answered, "Go on," as he glanced over his shoulder at me.

Then I prepared for him one of those useful little tricks that are sometimes used when a man is punctilious about shooting a fellow that he knows ought to be shot. There was no reason in the world why I should not have shot him in the back; and Jack, too. They were bent on murder—on a double murder. But I am squeamish about shooting anybody in the back. I don't like to shoot anybody at any time unless I feel it is necessary.

So I removed the automatic in my right pocket and turning my back toward Jeff, I poked the gun under the left side of my coat so that it was leveled directly at him; but to all appearances, I was off guard and looking out across the water. Out of the corner of my eye I was watching, and

Digitized by Google

watching as intently as ever I watched a scoundrel, too.

He moved a step toward me—another one—another one—then I fired.

The spring with which he had intended to land on me carried him into the air. He gulped hoarsely and fell on the gunnel—his head hanging over. He was dead. A long bright knife gleamed in the bottom of the boat at the feet of Mrs. Summers where it had fallen from his hand.

As I shot, I had turned. Jack had jumped up and started back, for the moment dumfounded. He didn't know what had happened.

"Lift up your hands," I said.

Instead he made a move toward his pocket and the next instant his arm was shattered. I was taking no chances. Perhaps I should have shot at some vital spot and been done with him—but I have never shot at a man's heart if it seemed that a broken arm would do as well.

"Lift up that other hand," I said.

He did.

I soon had him securely strapped and bound, and removing the gag from Mrs. Summers, raised her onto the seat in the stern and dumped Jack into the bottom of the boat. Jeff was dead—but I did not push his body into the water. I laid it, too, in the bottom of the boat. I always respect a dead man.

Mrs. Summers was unconsicous. She had fainted, and knew nothing of what had happened. Afterwards I learned that she had fainted when the first shot was fired.

I had no time to work with her, but dipped a handkerchief into the water and laid it across her face. Then I gave my attention to the engine and heading for the ferry, got onto the right course and made for the *Hesperus*.

I was challenged as I drew near the gangway.

I answered, "Mrs. Summers returning," and came alongside.

"She has fainted," I called out, "get Vivian—Miss Rublee."

"Miss Rublee has left the ship, sir," the sentry answered.

"What?" I demanded.

"Yes sir. She left about twenty minutes ago—with that fellow you locked up last night."

"With Lloyd?" I called up to him.

"I guess that's his name."

This was a mix-up, indeed, and the sentry told me all he could of what had happened, after I carried Mrs. Summers up and had seen her maid bring her to and put her to bed. The sentry talked fast because I told him I had no time to lose. He said that a man had come on board that afternoon with a message from me to Mr. Summers.

"I ordered him to keep off, sir, but he came up anyway. He said you sent him with a message. This was about six o'clock. I sent it in to Mr. Summers and he came out at once. He looked very pleased and hurried off.

"About an hour later the same fellow came back with a message to Mrs. Summers. She was walking up and down the deck here, sir, and after she read it she gave a cry and started right off. She said to me, 'Tell Vivian Melville's dying at the hospital.' Then she went.

"I told Miss Rublee and she was very worried. She went forward and had a long talk with that man; Lloyd, you call him. About twenty minutes ago they left. She said it was all right for him to go—and she was the only one left of the family on board, so we thought it must be all right."

I told him to get somebody to relieve him and for him to come with me. To the other sentry, I said:

"You shoot anybody with a strange face that comes up this gangway. Understand—shoot to kill too."

"Yes sir," he said.

XXVIII

I DIDN'T stop to ask the sentry his name. I had liked his face; that is the reason I had picked him at once to go with me. And I liked his manner, too; for when he stepped into the boat and saw the two bodies, he said nothing more than:

"Been having trouble, Mr. Everhard?" He said it eagerly, nervously, as though he was sorry to have missed it.

"A little," I answered. "But I think there will be plenty more."

As the tug, and a fast one it was too, cut through the water I puzzled over Vivian's reason for leaving the *Hesperus*. I am very nearly always right when I come to a conclusion because I make the most natural

Digitized by Google

deductions. Summers had left upon having received what purported to be a message from me. He had been cheerful, as though he had received good news. There was but one thing that would be good news; there was but one thing that would get him off the yacht.

The message evidently had been sent by Bowers and read something like this: "Bowers dead, the gang wiped out. Come at once." Bowers had sent Lloyd on board the yacht to lay the trap for just some such message; and since Lloyd had failed, Bowers had used my name instead. I remembered how closely he had questioned me as to whether or not Summers trusted me implicitly. With Bowers dead, Summers had nothing—or practically nothing to fear.

Then, I knew very well how Mrs. Summers had been lured off the boat.

Then Vivian, who was a very astute young woman, found herself alone on the yacht. Summers was gone. Obviously he had not dared to tell any one what was in the message he received, for that would have necessitated an explanation as to who Bowers was. Mrs. Summers was gone. She had gone presumably to see her husband at the hospital.

Vivian knew why I had gone ashore. She knew that trouble was in the air. She knew that Lloyd was one of the gang; therefore, she knew that Lloyd could probably take her to her sister—or perhaps to me. What she hoped to do, I could not imagine. There was no other possible explanation for her having left with Lloyd except on the promise that he would take her to Suzanne or to me.

Thanks to the lantern which Jack had placed on the pier before we left, I had little trouble in locating the landing.

I drove the tug to the beach and we leaped out, splashed through the water and mud and ran toward the shack, where I was thankful to see the lights still burning. I had begun the evening in an attempt to rescue Westerman, and it had developed into a rescue party for almost everybody. Mrs. Summers was safe, however. Westerman, I was sure, was also safe.

I made my companion wait some fifty feet from the shack while I again sneaked up and peeked into the window.

Vivian was there. She had evidently just arrived. Lloyd, cheerful and quite elated in fact, was explaining to Bowers how it had happened. The shotgun no longer protruded through the knot-hole. Ralph was in the room with the others. He sat on a backless chair and held the gun in the crook of his left arm. Summers was still tied to the wall.

Vivian stood like a queen in chains—only she was not in chains; she was not even tied. But she stood proud and poised and scornfully swept her eyes over the lustful, eager face of Bowers who sat listening to Lloyd and looking at her.

I cannot explain what follows except by saying that I have a strong sense of dramatic justice. Bowers had much to answer for, and I wanted to deliver my challenge to his face—not with a shot through the window. But all that he had done did not make the blood within me so hot as the way I saw him look at Vivian. Beside, he thought I was sleeping the unwaking sleep out in the bay; and I wished him to know better.

The two lanterns stood on the table, and between them Bowers leaned, gazing with sensual eyes at the dark, slender maiden—and as I looked I knew of what he was thinking. I went back to the sentry and gave him instructions, then I brought him to the window.

His instructions were not to take his eyes off Ralph, the man with the shotgun, and to keep him covered and to shoot the instant Ralph made a menacing move toward Summers or toward me. I had much confidence in the fellow. His was a good, stern face; and it meant a good deal to me to have a reliable ally ambushed where he could be of the most advantage. I could feel more at ease when all the odds seemed against me.

Then I went to the door and listened. I heard Bowers laugh; I heard him say:

"You misjudge me, my dear. I have a very tender heart."

He laughed again.

Slowly, inch by inch and so quietly that I could not hear a sound that I made, I pushed open the door and was standing full in it before Bowers looked past Vivian and saw me. My hands were in my coat pockets—apparently in an attitude of unpreparedness—but my thumbs were not visible.

I looked neither to the right nor to the left. I did not even glance at Vivian who, I could tell, turned toward me to see at

Digitized by Google

what Bowers was staring. I did not shift my eyes a hairbreadth to see what Ralph was up to, though I knew well that a quick man with a gun can get into action before even the man with the drop on him can fire. But Bowers was the man I came in to meet; and I did not even take notice of Lloyd.

Bowers rose slowly and leaned across the table. The bright light of the lanterns showed every line of his face, and hard as that face was, I could see the nervous twitching of his eyes and his lips moved twice before he asked in a voice of suppressed rage and astonishment—

"What are you doing here?"

If Vivian had been as other women, or if she had known me less well, it is likely that she would have rushed forward to me declaring herself to be saved and showing how glad she was to see me. But she did nothing of the kind. She was a consummate actress herself, and I am sure—I know in fact—that she did not reveal by a glance anything of what she felt when she saw me come in.

I had come in behind her so that when she looked at me her face was not visible to Bowers, or he might possibly have noticed some uncontrollable expression. Anyway, he didn't.

When he asked, "What are you doing here?" I waited some seconds to answer. The stillness of the room was like the hush that proceeds the show-down when men have staked everything possible on the value of their hands.

"I have come to report," I said quietly, "that I have carried out your orders as I saw fit."

"Where is Jeff? Where is Jack?" he demanded.

"They are in the tug. They have had some trouble. I didn't wait for them when we came back."

Bowers looked toward Ralph, then he looked toward Lloyd, and then again toward me. He said in a voice that strained to be easy:

"Well, that'll be all for you tonight, Everhard. I'll see you tomorrow. You've done fine. I'll make it all right with you tomorrow."

"And this woman," I said, indicating Vivian with a slight nod, "what are you going to do with her?"

"That is none of your —— business!" he burst out.

He hated me, and he could not help but show it. He was a bit afraid, too.

"Yes," I answered quietly. "It is."

VIVIAN stepped back. She moved backwards, keeping her face toward Bowers and Lloyd, and I caught sight of her hand waved behind her back and glanced for an instant from Bowers's face. She had a knife—a small one—in her hand and was trying to show it to me, to show me that she was armed or that she was willing to help me fight it out.

I was proud of her that moment. An idea came to me. I had Bowers to confront. I could not pass even the slightest word to her without every one in the room hearing; but I wanted her to try to cut the cords on Summers's arms. It was a hazardous situation, but I took several steps forward. I came to the table opposite Bowers, and I said:

"If Summers were to break his cords there might be cause for you and me to work together—" I hoped that she would catch the hint about Summers's cords though I was speaking to Bowers; but after a slight pause, I went on—"but since you want to know what business that woman is of mine, I will tell you bluntly. I want her as much as you do. There is a pack of cards. I'll play you a hand of poker to see who has her—I play the money you owe me for work done against your claim on her. Do you dare to do it?"

I wanted Vivian out of that room. If I won, I could send her out even if I had to send her into the next room—into the one behind the partition. I was confident that Bowers would not let her leave the house, though I beat him at a dozen hands of poker. But if she could once get out of range then, I was quite sure, the bullets would begin to fly.

Bowers did not answer at once. He looked at me hard. He knew that Lloyd and Ralph were looking at him. He was being "called"—as we say in poker, and he had to make good or lose prestige. When he did speak he asked again:

"Where is Jeff?"

"Oh I see," I said softly with a sneer, "you want that big negro here to stick me in the back in case you lose!"

The words cut him; thick and coarse as he was, they got under his crustaceous hide and stung. He clenched his heavy hands convulsively and narrowed his eyes.

Digitized by Google

"Do you play for that woman—or are you afraid?" I asked.

Lloyd shifted his position and came a step closer.

"You keep on the other side of this table," I said to him without taking my eyes from Bowers's face. I had thrown down the gauntlet.

"Say what in —— are you up to anyway!" Bowers shouted, losing his temper completely and drawing back as though preparing to rush at me.

"A few hours ago you called me a cold-blooded devil—well, do you expect a cold-blooded devil to get excited just because you shout at him? And I told you what I was up to. Perhaps I am not as cold-blooded as you think. I want this woman just as much as you do, and you will play for her or fight for her. Now take your choice!"

Perhaps it was theatrical, and perhaps I was posing a bit, when I practically had the drop on every man in the room. But I wanted to humiliate that big, brutal, ruthless fellow.

He did not know what it was to have himself challenged. With Black Jeff ever ready to fight for him, he could easily bully; with a flock of crooks to fly at his beck and orders, he could easily be ruthless. But man to man and face to face with some one who was not terrified, he could not carry himself with the same insolent power.

He simply stood up and glowered at me.

I could feel that Vivian was standing close behind me. She had not taken the hint I tried to convey when I spoke of Summers's cords. I stepped back and slightly to one side so that I bumped into her; and taking a hand from my pocket, I shoved her savagely saying:

"Get out of my way. Get over there by Summers, where you belong—I'll tend to you after this poker game."

That left me standing well in the center of the room. I looked at Ralph. He had shifted the shotgun so that it rested in his left hand instead of in the crook of his left arm. His eyes met mine as I looked at him, and he withdrew his gaze and glanced at Bowers.

"Don't look at Bowers for orders," I said. "He's a fourflusher."

Bowers answered me with a burst of profanity. He was making the bluff of his life for his prestige before the members of his gang, and wound up his cursing by asking me if I knew to whom I was talking?

I replied by asking what that had to do with poker.

He swore again and picking up the pack of cards threw it on the table, declaring that he would cut to see who won the woman; and if I lost that I would have to leave the shack and never come near him again.

It is one thing to cut cards and another to play a game of poker. But I said that we would cut.

He began shuffling them, when I interrupted him and said that it would be better if Lloyd, as a disinterested party, did the shuffling.

Lloyd began to shuffle.

The attention of all the men was on the cards. Vivian had every opportunity to cut the cords, and I risked a glance over my shoulder at her. She caught my eye, and with a quick gesture of my thumb against my side I tried—and succeeded this time—in conveying to her what I meant.

But Ralph was still some distance from the table, and though he was watching intently, yet he might look up at Summers any moment. I said to Bowers:

"Now we will do this thing right. I will hold the cards and let Ralph draw for me, instead of me cutting them. Then you hold them and let Lloyd draw for you."

"Why all that fooling?" he asked.

"I prefer it. Maybe I am superstitious," I answered.

It is a fact, and one well known to men who handle cards, particularly to the "magicians" that appear on the vaudeville stage, that a man who is dexterous with cards can force the one he wants into the hand of almost any one who is drawing. That is, if the position of the card I want the man to draw is known to me, I can practically make him take it. I can do that—as can any manipulator of the cards—much easier than I can cut and locate the card.

But more than that, I wanted Ralph's attention at the table.

Bowers said he didn't see the sense of drawing that way. There wasn't much sense to it, I know; but I acted as though I thought there was. I wanted to win because I wanted to make Vivian leave the room—the bystander is usually the one injured when a fracas starts.

Digitized by Google

From the way Lloyd handled the cards I could tell that he was no novice with them himself; and perhaps he flashed a glance to Bowers telling him it would be a good thing to follow the arrangement that I suggested. Anyway he agreed to it.

He shuffled the cards and held the pack fan-shaped out to Bowers to draw. That was not what I had suggested, that is, I had said that Bowers would hold the cards. But I made no protest. Ralph came up. He carried the gun, muzzle down, holding it with one hand.

BOWERS hesitated indecisively, started to draw one card then took another, and I could see plainly that he was trying to follow some guidance from Lloyd. Then he drew a card and placed it face down on the table without looking at it.

Lloyd laid down the pack and for the moment I was at their mercy, for I removed my hands to shuffle the deck. But when men are intent on gambling they forget all else. There are few—and perhaps but one passion stronger than that for scrutinizing the favors of chance.

I shuffled the cards, face down, keeping the deck flat on the table—but as every card-player knows, I could easily read the tips that were under my left hand. But I was careful not to show too much ease with the cards. I fumbled with them a bit as though I lacked the practise that had made Lloyd shuffle so easily. Then I held the deck, fan-shape up to Ralph.

"Draw quick," I said.

He reached forward and—of course—pulled out the card I had spotted and practically forced into his hand. He threw it face down on the table.

I put one hand back in my pocket.

"All right," I said to Bowers. "Turn her over."

He turned up his card.

It was the queen of spades.

"Turn up that one," I said to Ralph, putting my other hand into my pocket.

Ralph reached out and turned it up.

It was the king of spades.

Mine was the high and winning card.

The three men looked at me. Six eyes were against my face, but I looked only at Bowers. A long silence followed. Bowers's hand slipped inside his coat at the waistband. I wondered whether he was reaching for a knife or for a gun.

When he spoke it was not about the card, it was not about Vivian. The spectral suspicion at the back of his mind would not be quiet. He asked—

"*Where is Jeff?*"

"Jeff?" I said. "What has Jeff got to do with this woman. I'm going to take her with me."

"She is not going to leave this house—alive," Bowers said slowly, significantly. Then he added: "Do you think I'm such a fool as to let her get out of my hands again. Take her in the other room—if you want to."

It was an ugly thing to say and he said it in an ugly way. He would like to have had me go into the other room, myself. A fine chance of ever getting out, I would have had!

I stepped backwards until I was against the other wall. My suspicious attitude was obvious, perhaps the most obvious it had been. I heard Lloyd's excited whisper:

"He's got gats in his pockets!"

But I pretended not to have heard it.

I said to Vivian:

"Go into the other room!"

Bowers had come from around the table. His hand was hidden under the flap of his coat. He came forward as though to take part in the conversation. Behind him came Lloyd, and Ralph was moving along the partition wall toward a corner, he was holding the gun in both hands, ready to swing it into position.

"No, I will not go," Vivian said tensely, and she held out both hands to me as though pleading. But what I noticed was that she no longer had the knife.

Bowers came closer. I moved to one side. I had taken my left hand from my pocket and I grabbed Vivian's arm, but she pulled away, saying again and again:

"I will not go!"

I followed her as she moved, for I was desperate to have her out of the way, and the two of us passed Summers, who, with the gag still in his mouth stood erect against the wall with his hands behind him. He stood more erect than I had ever seen him, and his eyes were bright. In a passing glance I noticed that glazed terror was not only gone, but that his eyes seemed aflame.

Bowers came on. He stood almost in front of Summers when Vivian, exasperated at my urgency, cried out:

"No Don, I will not leave you!"

Digitized by Google

Those words were like a flash of lightning in the brain of Bowers. They illuminated a situation that had baffled him. He understood then that I had played—not to win her as he wanted to win her, but because I loved her.

Many things happened at once.

With a guttural roar, Bowers flung himself forward at me, the inevitable long knife of his gang flashing from under his coat. But I instinctively wheeled and shot at Ralph; a gun is more deadly than a knife, and he was the dangerous one. I had shot not an instant too soon, for the gun that he was throwing down on me and which would have covered Vivian, too, was discharged harmlessly into the floor.

Almost at once a report rang through the window, showing that the man on watch outside was on the alert.

As I shot at Ralph I turned to stop Bowers.

But a miracle had happened. Bowers was so close that he probably would have reached me—for I had taken my left hand out of my pocket while trying to persuade Vivian to leave the room, else I could have caught him and Ralph almost simultaneously. But as I said, Bowers would probably have reached me, if a miracle had not happened.

His uplifted hand was caught and stopped for a moment in the fierce grasp of Summers, who, as if magic had broken his bonds, suddenly leaped from the wall, and met the man he dreaded more than anything in earth or out of it in a hand-to-hand fight. With the small knife, which Vivian had passed to him, in his hand, Summers slashed at Bowers's throat.

I shot again, but not at Bowers. Summers was between me and him—but Lloyd had sprung forward—a knife in his hand, a long knife, too—to aid his chief. Lloyd spun around like a drunken man that has lost his balance and fell.

Summers was much smaller, much weaker much less well armed than Bowers, and almost instantly Bowers had jerked his hand free from Summers's grasp and had slashed him. Summers was fighting desperately—but hopelessly, pitifully, though Bowers's throat was red where the blade of a pocket-knife had gone in and come out.

The men shifted back and forth so that I did not care to risk a shot. I simply reached across Summers and brought my heavy automatic down with full force on the thick, hard skull of Bowers—and he dropped like an ox before the butcher's mallet.

THERE is strange justice in the destinies that weave the patterns of men's lives into the affairs of this world. It was not my blow that killed Bowers. Summers had pierced the jugular vein of his enemy, and Bowers never recovered consciousness.

With his own hands, the weakling and erstwhile coward, had avenged himself—but the cost was heavy. Bowers had knifed him viciously, and Summer's cheek was laid open from cheekbone to chin and a long cut was on his breast and another had gone into the top of his shoulder.

I was bending over him, doing my best to staunch the wounds and to see if vital organs had been pierced, for the cut in his breast had been aimed at his heart but the knife glanced off the breast bone, when another shot was fired outside the shack. I jumped up and ran to the door.

"I'm afraid I missed him, sir," said my sentry off the *Hesperus* apologetically.

Then he explained that after the shooting inside the house he had started to come in and see if he could be of any assistance, when he heard footsteps running toward him.

"Perhaps I should have told him to halt," he said, "but I thought it would be best to ask questions afterwards. So I shot at him—then he turned and ran."

I suppose, though I never learned any more, that it was the man who had been guarding the path to the shack and who had mistaken me earlier in the evening for Lloyd. Bowers was a careful and cunning man, he planned deeply, but the best plan of the best crook must in time go awry.

The heavy firing had attracted attention in the houses at a distance, and voices were calling back and forth in the darkness as men approached us. I had the sentry—whose name I afterwards learned was Smith, and a good name it is, worn by many men who have redeemed earlier mistakes—to tell the people to come up and that we needed help.

Foreigners they were for the most part, timid and suspicious and awe-stricken at the sight they found in the house. And they stood around curiously, chattering excitedly and waiting for the police who had been called by the nearest telephone which was, I judged, at least a mile away.

Digitized by Google

Vivian was bent over Summers, who bore his wounds like a man, and was happy to hear her call him a hero, which she did readily, saying that he had saved my life—which was perhaps true. And I told him that it was undoubtedly true.

Then I suddenly remembered something. I went to the table and got one of the lanterns, and returning to the corner, I lifted the trap door and held the lantern down. I could make out the form of a body.

"Westerman!" I called, peering down into the hole.

I heard a weak answer.

I dragged rather than coaxed two of the gaping fellows, Italians or Austrians I think they were, to the edge of the cellar door. All of the half dozen or more that had crowded into the room were curious to know and see what was down there, but none wanted to come close. These two seemed fearful lest I was about to push them into the hole, but when I jumped down myself, they leaned far over and were ready enough to help when I raised the limp body of Westerman up to their reach.

Westerman had managed to remove my impromptu gag; but he was cold and sore and faint, and his wound pained him so that he was very weak.

Vivian threw up both hands in a gesture of amazement and her eyes stared unbelieving at the boy's white face. Westerman afterwards admitted that during the long painful hours he had lain in the damp, dark hole, he had been terribly in doubt as to whether I had saved his life or whether I was really insane and crazy enough to imagine that I had killed him.

He said that he had been afraid to call out when he heard the shooting and tramping overhead because he did not know whether Bowers or the police—in his experience he had thought the attacking party could be none other than the police—had won.

Vivian questioned him and me as to how he came to be there. I told him not to talk as he was too weak; and I told her:

"Westerman is responsible for all the fortunate things that have happened tonight. I'll explain later in detail. But he saved my life by pretending to be dead after I dropped him into the cellar, and when I came back to fish him out—I found Mr. Summers a prisoner. Then our little melodrama in which you have played a part began to unfold."

"Don," she said reprovingly, "are you cynical—with all this."

She turned her face away and pointed to the three bodies that had been placed side by side across the room. She was kneeling by the side of Westerman.

"No," I said, "I am not cynical—but a melodrama, my dear, is a tragedy that ends happily. Don't you understand?"

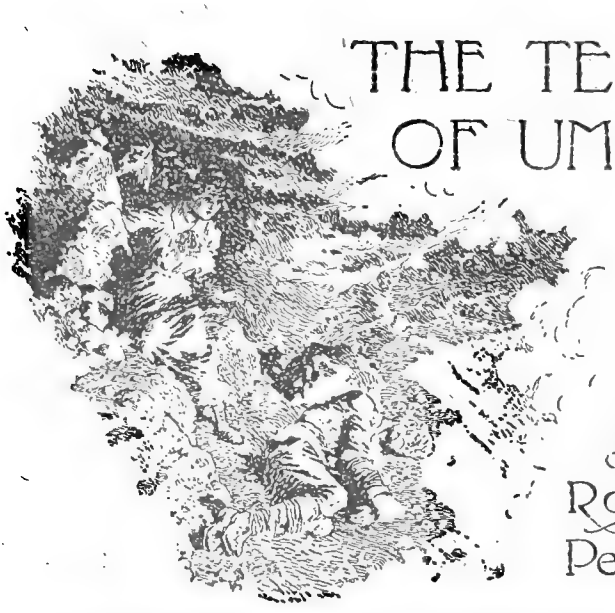
I stooped and put my arms around her.

SOMETIMES KNOWN AS FATE

By Charles C. Jones

YOU go off your course when her blarney you fall for;
She tricks you of what you are risking your all for;
She beckons a tempest and ship-wrecks you duly
In sight of new islands; she's whimsical—truly!
And just when you're drowned till you couldn't be wetter,
She tosses you something a hundred times better;
You let down, touch bottom, then beachward you wend it
And find a new fortune—with no place to spend it!

Digitized by Google



THE TEST OF UMALGI

by Robert J Pearsall

Author of "Anting-Anting," "Muchacho of Tumbling Water," etc.

THE news of the retaliatory killing came to Kiagan at daybreak. Very shortly afterward Lansdale had his constabulary detail ready to start to Kurug, yet already it was blisteringly hot. Like an incessant shower of fiery darts, the burning rays of the tropic sun flooded the Ifugao village, thrusting through the doorway-windows of the squalid *suali* shacks, penetrating brake and palm cluster, and shivering on the gray rocks and white sand into fragments that set the still air quivering in torment.

Only one house in the village still remained in shadow. Oddly enough, it was the two-room bungalow occupied by Captain Lansdale and his wife. And the shadow was that of the god-haunted mountain Arawan—of the very crest of that mountain, the home of the god Umalgi!—flung like a menace across the landscape from the east.

In view of a certain day-old decree, it was an ominous circumstance. The natives, huddled in curious watchful groups beneath their stilt-supported houses, commented upon it in chattering undertones:

"See, the *balians* are right." "Umalgi, the god of earth-fire, has marked him." "It is a sign!"

And while they talked they flung excited, furtive glances toward the group of three that stood in front of the threatened home.

But none of the group seemed aware of this attention. Captain Lansdale, young, tall and soldierly, with wide-set, clear-seeing eyes, went on with his crisp instructions to the native sergeant he was leaving in charge of the town. Nearer the bungalow stood his wife, waiting till he had finished.

A little way off, two squads of native constabulary, dressed curiously in khaki jackets, forage caps and breech-clouts, with their legs bare, leaned on their Springfields. Across the street, in and about the *cuartel*, lounged the remainder of Captain Lansdale's brown-skinned and uniquely uniformed company. And above the *cuartel* a faded American flag hung limply.

"I guess that's all, Umahog," Captain Lansdale concluded. "The main thing is, if the people start any *canao* or anything, to keep your men out of it and in hand. And you've got to keep them in barracks to do that. Don't you go letting them run all over the *barrio*, like you did once before. But I guess nothing'll happen. Everything's quiet enough. Quieter than usual, by jinks," he spoke to himself reflectively, with a glance down the empty street.

Sergeant Umahog stood stiffly at attention. He was a well-set-up Ifugao warrior, with good features, and with a certain light in his eyes that most of the others lacked. More nearly than any other of the brown

Digitized by Google

people, he had seemed to grasp the spirit and the purpose of the White-Man-Who-Would-Rule.

Once he had saved Captain Lansdale's life from a hair-brained religious zealot at the immediate peril of his own. And Captain Lansdale had made him his second-in-command, and had come to trust him absolutely.

But as Lansdale's glance returned to Umahog, the white man received a momentary but very disquieting impression. For an instant a troubled something—was it fear or shame or anxiety or a compound of all three?—seemed to peep from Umahog's eyes. Lansdale could have sworn Umahog was about to speak. But he seemed to choke back what he wanted to say, saluted swiftly, about-faced, and crossed the street toward the *cuartel*.

The captain stared after him for a moment, half-minded to call him back. But he had nothing definite to say to him. Then Lansdale turned to his wife, and in an instant, as he met her unresponsive eyes, all thought of Umahog was gone.

"Well, I'm off," he announced, with brisk cheerfulness that rang false and forced.

"Very well," she replied, unsmilingly.

"I'm sorry," and as he took her hand his manner changed to the apologetic, "but this time it's absolutely necessary. You see how it is, don't you, Helen?"

"I hadn't objected, had I?"

"No, dear, but I thought—" Lansdale stumbled awkwardly and stopped.

"Well—good-by!"

Her manner was chilling—half sullen. Lansdale looked at her almost pleadingly. And as he studied her, marveling over the fact that the woman he loved could seem so like a stranger to him, a sudden fresh sense of her beauty smote him like a pain.

He saw more plainly than ever before how incredible a vision she was—incredible, that is, and out of place, in her present savage setting. The sunlight glinted in her waving brown hair, and lit up the soft perfection of her oval face.

Outlined beneath her khaki walking costume, the slender delicacy of her figure accused him. Steel-muscled she was, and he knew it, yet how exquisitely beautiful, how plainly made for vanity and delight and the easy path and the soft culture of her people! And he had brought her into the jungle!

And yet she had come willingly. She had come gladly. She had loved him then. Surely, she had not ceased to love him!

Suddenly he found himself talking swiftly, trying to justify himself, to win her back into his life, to dispel by explanation the torturing coldness that had lately lain between them like a barrier.

"You see, darling, it's really a test case. It's a plain challenge to our authority. If they'd killed the murderer himself, I could afford to pass it over. But the only crime of the man that was killed was that he lived in Nagukuran, the same village as the murderer. That's all the people of Kurug cared about; they wanted to get some one from Nagukuran, no matter who.

"Now, of course, Nagukuran will strike back. It's the old tribal custom, the old spirit of village unity, and it's what causes all the trouble. And the *balians* encourage it because it gives them their power. We've got to do away with it; we've got to get the whole country to acknowledging one authority, the American authority.

"Then we can do something, pacify the people, civilize them, get them to working together. Educate them, too, I suppose, though that's outside my line. I'd rather teach them to work. And then—but I forgot," the mounting enthusiasm of his tone dying away into a rather uneasy laugh before the indifference of her look. "You've heard all that before."

"Yes, I have," she agreed.

"Well," a little listlessly, "I'll be back before night, sure." There seemed nothing more he could say, and he bent and kissed her swiftly.

TURNING away, stiffening instantly into the soldier, he stepped in front of the waiting squads and snapped out a command.

Like the picked and well-drilled men they were, the troopers jerked to attention. Lansdale felt, as always, a touch of professional pride as his eyes traveled down the straight lines. Confident in the welding power of military discipline, he felt he could trust those men to the death.

And yet, as in the case of Umahog, there seemed some change in them this morning. The eyes of the Ifugaos are ordinarily as opaque as curtained and unlit windows; but here and there a shamed and guilty

Digitized by Google

uneasiness seemed to peep forth, as at some secret and sinister knowledge, some hidden treachery.

And suddenly, like a revelation, there came to Lansdale the thought that the quiet village was too quiet today—that it, too, contained a threat. Suddenly an unaccustomed feeling of loneliness, of detachment, almost of fear came over him, the only white man within a hundred miles.

The very air, hot and close and dead, seemed alien; the great hills closed around the village black and menacing; and the fecund jungle beyond seemed full of unimaginable steaming horrors.

But his mind reacted swiftly. Impatiently he brushed away his fears. There was this about Lansdale, that whatever lay around him, one thing always lay directly before him, his work, his duty; and it must be grappled with. Perhaps he did not realize how, when he laid hold of it, it turned into a life preserver, the like of which his wife lacked.

Sharply his commands rang out, and he led his men down the street, and headed them into the Kurug trail.

Helen answered his parting wave of the hand, and watched him as long as he was in sight. For some minutes more she stood as though rooted. With eyes suddenly grown desperate, she stared over the scoriac hills to the west.

It seemed as though with her gaze she would overleap the western horizon, as though, willy-nilly, she would follow the circle of the earth around. And indeed, much of her waking hours she spent with her thoughts in that other world of her heart's desire, the land of her nativity.

But her feet were bound to the burning sands of Ifugaoland.

Presently she roused herself, looked around at the nearer view, and with an unconscious gesture of infinite distaste, turned toward the teetery steps of the bungalow.

From the *cuartel* across the street a hundred eyes watched her. When she had disappeared, half as many tongues wagged debatingly. Helen would have been as surprised as Lansdale to know that the subject of that debate was her own immediate future.

They wanted to know what should be done with her after the White-Man-Who-Would-Rule had succumbed, as it was assumed he must, to the judgment of Umalgi.

Upon one thing all were agreed, that she could not be allowed to carry the tale back to her own people, whose numbers were as the desert sands, and whose vengeance was sure. But otherwise the suggestions were friendly and not altogether indelicate.

The Ifugaos of those days were a savage people, head-hunters and worshipers of false gods, but they were a people of many strong, primitive virtues, too. And the chief of their virtues was named Loyalty.

Lansdale was their captain, and he had often proven himself to be their friend. Their loyalty to him had run counter to an older creed, and had been pushed aside. But that did not mean that they were altogether base, nor altogether untroubled in mind.

Suddenly Umahog spoke up with a flare of exasperation.

"What foolishness is this?" he asked. "Is your captain dead already? Do you know the will of Umalgi, you men of darkened eyes? Tonight is the test, and tomorrow we shall know. Now we know nothing, save that we are soldiers of the white man, and I am your sergeant. And it is the hour of drill!"

So he herded them out upon the hot parade-ground, and drilled them thoroughly for two hours. The work eased his mind a little, but not entirely. For Umahog was that day a man sorely at war within himself.

Two courses opened before him, two conflicting allegiances claimed him. Tradition tugged at him, the rush-fires of ancient superstitions beckoned him; but, stronger than any of his fellows, he felt that newer urge, that indefinable aspiration, that longing after the as yet unknowable, that the stern teaching of John Lansdale had brought to so many of his awakening tribe.

TO ONE other person in Kiagan, that day also spelled decision.

To Helen Lansdale, life in that God-forsaken village had become an impossible nightmare.

And still she had lived bravely enough. She had nothing with which to reproach herself. Except the folly of her one first mistake, from which everything else had sprung.

A little over a year before, she had married. It had been a swift courtship, a love-match. John Lansdale was on leave from Iloilo; Helen and her father had but re-

Digitized by Google

cently arrived in Manila, fresh from the States.

It may be that the spirit of the tropics, which spelled to her then only sun-kissed romance with convenient ices on the side, had gotten into her blood. The force which drew John Lansdale and her together, and mated them, had seemed as natural and irresistible as the force that moves the stars.

Her love threw around the life they would lead together an impossible glamour. She saw the future rainbow-tinted. Her imagination pictured her bearing the light of civilization and all its blessings to dark-skinned waiting people, who would instantly accept her gifts and worship the giver. And she turned unseeing away from others who pointed out less pleasing shades in the picture.

Such, for example, as the anomalous position she would hold as the wife of a man holding that strange hybrid rank of captain of constabulary. Betwixt and between, rated above a senior non-com. but below a second lieutenant, a white man whose troop is brown, an as yet unplaced addition to the army personnel whose only excuse for being is unmeasurable usefulness.

But in Iloilo, even in her honeymoon, she encountered the discomforts of that position. Though she was not ostracised, she was not accepted as an equal by the ladies of the post—she was, in short, patronized, To her, it was unendurable. And so an early ambition she had had for her husband hardened into fixed resolve. By hook or crook, he should win his commission.

It was concerning the means that should be used to accomplish this end that they had their first disagreement. A disagreement that had never been forgotten by her —so lightly, it seemed, her husband pushed her desires aside.

But at any rate she was glad when he was transferred, and against advice and remonstrance she prepared to accompany him.

It was during the long lazy journey up the western coast of Luzon that she suffered her first misgivings. Days ran into slowly passing days; at each small, jungle-bordered port they discharged passengers and cargo; and it seemed that the country grew visibly degraded before their eyes, for at each stop the people were wilder of look and nakeder of person.

At last she and her husband were the only passengers left on board—they had been the only white passengers from the beginning—and then they themselves disembarked at a little, marshy, malarious barrio called Vigan. It seemed to her like the end of the world.

But their way led still farther, inland, along a trail so unbroken that it seemed that man had never passed that way before. It wound perilously around the edges of jagged precipices, through dark chasms, along narrow rice terraces, through stout and rasping *cogon* grass twice as high as a man's head. It led into a savage country, harsh, primordial, implacable. It led to Kiagan.

Even when she reached that village, when her husband dismissed their constabulary escort, when she met the blank, incurious, seemingly soulless stare of the villagers, she kept up her courage. And the limp-shouldered, discouraged-looking young lieutenant whom Lansdale was to relieve met her brave face with a look of utter astonishment, which changed swiftly into deep concern and pity.

She laughed her way through it all. She even jested at the row of human skulls, alternating with carabao, with which the front of half the native shacks were decorated. But that night, for a long time after her husband slept, she lay staring up into the darkness, her hands clenched, horror-filled.

Still, she had chosen her life. She would be brave. She arose in the morning with that determination. And so she dismissed the *muchacho* and did her own housework; she arranged and rearranged the primitive furniture and decorations; she read their scanty supply of books over and over again. She vied with her husband in learning the Ifugao language. She tried to satisfy her social instinct by mingling with the native women.

But it was no use. The world was an alien one. She encountered for the first time the baffling enigma of racial differences. She found the thoughts of the people unfathomable, their language a hopeless jabbering, their ways past comprehension. Each day became an arid waste of time. She seemed to be living in a spiritual void.

It had been different with her husband. Distant villages had to be visited; recalcitrant *balians* urged or forced into line; *rancheria* feuds prevented or ended; his

Digitized by Google

constabulary recruited and drilled. Above all, the natives must be trained into ways of cleanliness and industry and decent living. He forgot himself in his work. He had the salvation of enthusiasm.

But Helen took to sitting still for long hours, staring out through the window of the bungalow at the desolate hills, and sometimes thinking thoughts she really had no right to think.

It was perhaps because of her growing introspection that she did not notice the gradual change in the attitude of the people. And Lansdale himself was too confident, too trustful of outward appearances, and too busy with the more obvious problems of administration.

Lansdale's predecessor had been a slack-fibered youth, whose lukewarm efforts at governing had aroused mainly an indifferent sort of curiosity. Lansdale's more vigorous methods had stirred up stronger feeling.

In many quarters this was friendly. But in the minds of most of the natives, this friendliness was mingled with cold suspicion. He disturbed their inertia, he upset established tradition, he interfered with age-old creeds and customs.

Upon this foundation of natural suspicion the *balians*, village religious heads and rulers —jealous always of any power that threatened their own—built well. Among a people the warriors of which habitually decided for or against a military expedition on such chance as that of a fly lighting on a piece of cane, it is plain that little was left to human judgment. Signs and omens governed the conduct of every one, and each question lay in the lap of a god.

So to Umalgi, according to the custom of centuries the judge of the ambitious, was referred the problem of the White-Man-Who-Would-Rule. It would have been a bold Ifugao who would have even hinted that Umalgi was a *balian*-created god, that his decisions were dependent upon their will, and that the fiery ordeal to which Lansdale had been condemned was, in reality, no test at all, but preordained and certain destruction.

A LITTLE before sundown that day, Lansdale returned.

Usually Helen watched for his coming anxiously. Today, with a sullen effort of the will, she held herself from watching. It was not until she heard the sound of marching men, and his sharp, "Detail, halt!" in front of the *cuartel*, that she went to the door of the bungalow.

Two prisoners, with their wrists bound, were passing through the door of the make-shift jail underneath the *cuartel*. Lansdale closed and locked that door, called an order to Umahog to post sentries, and dismissed his detail.

Then, with his usual swift and eager home-coming stride, he crossed the street. And his very eagerness, coupled with that bright look on his face, intensified Helen's long-repressed resentment at the emptiness of her life.

Nor did it help him any that, immediately after their first greeting—trying to put aside the coldness of it—he should plunge into an account of his day's work.

It had been easier than he had expected, he said. He had found the two head-hunters in the Kurug marketplace. It almost seemed as though they had been waiting for him. No one had even objected to his taking them. Only there was something about the natives he could not understand. They were almost too quiet. . . .

It came to him with a chill that Helen herself was too quiet, standing there with a cold, drawn face, and twisting fingers.

But because he could think of nothing else to do, he talked on, while he poured lukewarm water from a gourd into an earthen washbasin. The incident was, after all, a favorable one. Kurug was the most powerful *rancheria*. Kurug recognized his authority. It was a good example for the rest. And when they all recognized it, unquestioningly. . . .

It seemed to Helen for the moment crass egotism. And all of a sudden her self-control snapped and she cried out sharply:

"Oh, I've heard enough of that!"

John started as though he had been stung. But he carefully dried his face before turning, and then he spoke evenly:

"I'm sorry. But I thought you'd be interested."

"I don't see why you should," snapped Helen. "I've never pretended to be."

"Well," deliberated John, "it might be better for you if you did take an interest. I know it's hard——"

"Oh, you know! You know very little of my feelings, it seems to me, or care! What kind of a life do I live, penned up

Digitized by Google

here day after day and month after month? You have your life—it seems you can be content to devote your life to this sort of thing—but I can't. And I won't—any longer."

"Helen, dear, I know it's hard for you," John repeated more gravely.

He was shocked and stunned, but deep down in his nature, in the very soul of the man, one question revolved itself slowly. What should he do? What would be best for her?

But the sudden rush of Helen's long-pent-up resentment drove her past thought, though she knew she would regret the things she was saying half an hour later.

"If you do you've been cheerful enough in the knowledge. If that's the measure of your love, I call it selfishness. As for that, if you really ever loved me, I don't think you'd have brought me to a place like this. But I've decided one thing—I'm not called upon to sacrifice myself any longer."

"I've done my best," said John, his voice a little unsteady, but a little harder, too.

"But you haven't. You haven't. If you'd done what I wanted you to do back in Iloilo—accept the help of my father and uncle, and their influence in Washington—you'd have had a commission today."

"But I thought we'd settled that," protested John. "I thought we'd decided——"

"You settled it. You decided it. You quoted the old platitudes—and you've lived by them—and where have you got with them? In this hole at the end of the earth, with a company of naked savages, while younger men with half your chance, and—and ability, I grant you that, get into the regulars. And I'll be courtesying to their wives. No, thank you!"

There was a little pause, during which Helen, observing the effect of her words in John's whitening face, stood aghast at what she had said. Then John was speaking slowly and stumblingly, yet with a certain deep, quiet strength manifest through his agitation, as the great swell of the ocean upbears a wind-lashed sea.

"I don't blame you, Helen. I—I can't. I can't expect you to sacrifice your life. It seemed a matter of principle with me—to win my own way—maybe it was pride instead. But I honestly thought you agreed with me, and I thought our love would be finer if we lived up to it.

"I was wrong about your agreement—and maybe I was wrong all the way through. There's only one thing that's clear to me, and that is that I've no desire to keep you here—against your will. If you would be happier somewhere else—but of course you will. It has been terrible for you—I can see that now."

A look of perturbation flashed across Helen's face, but she set her lips tightly. John went on heavily:

"There's a boat leaving Vigan next week for Manila. You can take that. If you don't want to stay in Manila, there's Japan, China—you may want to travel for a while. After that—well, we can arrange matters. I haven't much pay, but a very little of it will do me to live on. The rest is yours, of course."

Certain Ifugao chieftains might have enlightened Helen on one side of her husband's character. They might have told her that he was a man who did not know how to quarrel or to parley, who took words at their face value only.

He was sending her away.

Unhesitatingly, with the dispatch and decision with which he would have disposed of a rebellious subordinate, he had disposed of her. Very well, then!

"I'm glad we agree," said Helen. "Only I shouldn't think of troubling you for an allowance. My father is able——"

"We'll not discuss that at present," said Lansdale, with a face like a gray mask.

Then, because he could not trust his composure any longer, he turned stiffly to the door and descended into the street.

"He wants me to go, he wanted to get rid of me," gasped Helen behind him.

And John! He crossed the street toward the *cuartel*, and none but he could know how the hills and the heavens danced before his eyes and all his world seemed tumbling into ruin.

He knew that later he would blame himself greatly. Later he would realize that the thing had been inevitable from the beginning. He had had no right to drag her into such a life. All that Helen had said was true. Except that he had not loved her—and he loved her no less now that he was losing her, but more, immeasurably more. But these thoughts were very vague. They were like tiny rivulets mingling with the sea of his consciousness, the name of which was Pain.

Digitized by Google

Under the *cuartel* the two prisoners still stared stolidly through the palings. In front and back of their prison a sentry paced mechanically. The rest of the constabulary had repaired to their makeshift barracks. In the natural order of things they would be about their evening meal.

But instead they were idle, squatting about in groups, silent save for whisperings, waiting. . . .

They were waiting for the Call of Umalgi, the long weird, siren-like whistle, that through the centuries had signaled the end of would-be usurpers of power.

LANSDALE, like a man dazed with a sudden blow, was staring blindly into the blood-red sunset, when that call came. Something of the strangeness of it pierced to his befogged consciousness.

He started to turn toward the sound, but that moment was borne down from behind by three of his own constabulary. He was tripped, he was held, his hands were wrenched behind his back and tied, and his cry for help was choked in his throat by the swift pressure of a gag.

Gasping and struggling, Lansdale was jerked to his feet again. Before he knew what was happening, he was being forced down the street by a dozen of the men in whom he had most trusted.

Then from the *suali* shacks poured the villagers, men, women and children, and fell into disorderly procession. Dogs yelped about the flanks of that procession. A vibrant, anticipatory excitement pervaded it. There began a strange, wild chanting.

But—and this circumstance was the strangest and most ominous of all to Lansdale—there was not one person that showed surprise, not one person save himself that had not known what was about to happen, and been waiting for it.

To Helen, watching from the doorway, her shocked nerves quivering with anger, the episode seemed at first unreal, fantastic, like a trick in a play. It was many seconds before she realized that the incredible thing she was witnessing was true. Then she leaped from the house like a tigress, straight toward the struggling group.

She did not realize it, but that moment she also leaped from her house of Self, the walls of which had prisoned and tortured her so long.

Running, she jerked a service revolver from her belt. As she threw it up to the aim, her arm was clutched from behind. She was whirled violently around, and looked into the dark face of Umahog.

"You let alone," he said sternly. "You come back to the house."

"Umahog!" cried Helen, with wild and incredulous appeal. "You too! Let me go. Don't you see, your captain——"

"I see," replied Umahog, somberly. "You ask me help. No can do. No one can do. Listen!"

By then, so swiftly moved events, Lansdale had been overcome and was being hurried away, and the brown people were swarming into the street. The chant had begun, so harsh and barbaric that Helen chilled at the sound of it. It was like a wail, like a dirge, like a war-song, like an invocation.

It was savage and cruel and primitively strong, and yet it contained a paradoxical childlike appeal. Of the words and phrases in it, many were unfamiliar, like dead and forgotten expressions reborn from an elder age. But underlying and pervading it all, like the major motif of an opera, appealing, justifying, explanatory, was the incessant repetition—

"*To the judgment of Umalgi!*"

"You hear," said Umahog. "It is the test. Umalgi will speak in earth-fire. If the captain live, he rule. If Umalgi take him, he go. No one can stop. Why should any one stop? Is it not right?"

Woman-like, Helen caught at Umahog's tone rather than his words. There was uncertainty in it. Was it right? He was not sure. And instantly, working desperately fast as her mind was, she seized upon his unconsciously expressed weakness as her one chance of help.

She reeled weakly, and Umahog caught her. It seemed as though she would fall without his aid, and so he supported her back toward the bungalow, and up the ladder-like steps. But once inside she whirled around like a wild thing of the jungle, and gripped at his bare arms.

"Umahog!" she cried, her eyes burning accusingly into his, "I thought you were our friend! I thought you were a true man and a soldier. Will you do this because it is safe? Will you stand by and let him be killed?"

"It is the law. They are my people,"

Digitized by Google

answered Umahog half sullenly. But for all that he seemed to writhe away from her look. And Helen followed him up mercilessly, thrusting at his doubt-torn soul with short stabbing sentences.

"You, his friend and soldier! You, who swore loyalty to him! Will you break that oath? Will you desert him when he needs you? You know he is your friend, and a friend to your people. You know that is why the *balians* hate him. You know this is a trick to destroy him. Will you be a coward and let him be killed? Or will you be a brave man and a true soldier, and tell me all you know, and help me to save him?"

"I will do this," said Umahog. "I will help you to save yourself. I will see you get to Vigan and a boat. That no easy. They say you no go back. Maybe they kill me. But I do that for him."

The offer fell on Helen's ears like a fool's whisper. Her mind was filled, her soul was submerged and swept clean by the rush of one elemental impulse. To save *him!*

To save him she would bend every power she had of mind or soul or body. She would cudgel her wits, she would plead and argue and cajole, she would employ all the powers of her womahood to beat down the reluctance of this bare-breasted savage.

Not easily did Umahog yield. The faint light fled, night fell like a blanket, and still in the candleless room Helen strove with him.

But at last he gave way. With a mutter of acquiescence, he led her through the back door of the bungalow. They descended, not into the village street, but into the brake that bordered the foot-hills.

The village was now silent as a grave. But from the distance, from somewhere on the side of lowering Arawan, the home of Umalgi, there came a low-noted tumult like the sound of a moving army.

Umahog gestured toward that sound. "Your man is there," he said. "I tell you now. They take him to the top of the mountain of earth-fire. They tie him and leave him there. So he is tested."

"How is that a test?" demanded Helen, tensely.

"If he is there in the morning he is ruler of all Ifugaoland. If he is gone—he is gone."

"But how can he be gone if no one comes near him?"

"I no understand. But long time—many times—this be done. Many men want to rule Ifugaoland. They be strong men, good men. They be put on top of mountain, as is the law. They be left alone—all watch so they be alone. In the night, Umalgi speak. In the morning, men gone. No body, no bones, all gone. I no understand."

"Listen!" ordered Helen. "You must take me to him. You must find a way that I may get to him. After all the people leave him, when Umalgi in whom I do not believe comes upon him, I must be there."

"But they all watch," objected Umahog. "They all make a circle and watch. No one can get through."

"I will get through," said Helen.

And through the tearing brake, a tiny indomitable figure lost in the vast blackness of the night, she started up the side of the sacred mountain. Umahog followed reluctantly.

THIS is the form of the crest of Arawan, the Elder Brother of mountains.

Round like a bowl is the rim of its god-haunted crater, and like the inner surface of a bowl the smooth, lava-coated sides of that crater dip downward. Except here and there, where great boulders of igneous rock project jaggedly.

From the circular edge of the crater, the mountain falls away on all sides smooth and bare. Not a single starved shrub or jutting rock breaks its desolate surface, blasted generations ago by the fire of an upflung inferno.

On the night of the judgment of Umalgi, two hundred yards below the summit, a living ring of brown humanity stretched clear around the mountain. Men, women, children, and babes-in-arms, they were from Kurug, from Nagukuran, from Kiagan, from Balalos, from all of the divided and trouble-ridden villages of Ifugaoland.

And toward that living ring, winning their way upward in hard fashion, came Helen Lansdale and Umahog.

For some time they had been moving very cautiously and keeping under cover. Now Umahog, who was a little in advance, halted Helen with an uplifted hand.

"Close!" he warned. "Very close. Listen!"

An indefinable exhalation of sound, compounded of breathings, stirrings, whisper-

Digitized by Google

ings, came to them from the clustering watchers above.

"They wait," said Umahog. "They watch very close. You see—no chance."

Helen replied by dropping to her hands and knees and starting on again.

Umahog held back a moment and then followed. After they had crept perhaps fifty yards farther, he pulled at her skirt.

"They catch you, they kill you," he said.

"Do you think me a fool, that you must tell me such things?" asked Helen. "Come!"

And Umahog, savage though he was, sighed his acceptance of the inevitability of a woman's will. A few minutes later, when they were flattened against the ground and creeping along literally inch by inch, he spoke again.

"Then we try," he said. "One way maybe we can do. When we get close, very close, I leave you. I go 'way. You find place where men are few. You wait there. Maybe there be trouble in a minute. Maybe men all excited—look, move, other way —way I go. Then you go through, while men all look other way. You understand? We try."

"What do you mean?" asked Helen, suspiciously, catching only the fact that he meant to leave her.

"You trust me," replied Umahog earnestly. "You do way I tell you. It is only way." And he repeated his instructions.

Still Helen did not understand. But she reflected she lay at the mercy of Umahog. A single cry from him would bring the natives upon her. She was compelled to trust him. And if, after having brought her so far, he chose to creep away and save his skin, she could not blame him. She would do what had to be done alone.

So she acquiesced, and went on.

They were very near now. The murmuring ahead became punctuated into individual sounds. Presently they could see the natives, not a dozen yards away, squatting cross-legged in groups with little spaces between.

"Now I go," whispered Umahog. "Good-by!"

He writhed swiftly to the right, and the darkness swallowed him.

Helen, perforce, crept on, but with a new feeling of helplessness and loneliness. After a while she could have touched the man nearest her with her hand. He was on the extreme left of a gap of perhaps twenty natives. Directly in front of Helen, between that group and the next, there was an unoccupied space perhaps six feet across.

In the middle of that gap in the circle of natives, there looked to be a slight depression. Nerving herself, Helen edged forward until she lay in it, almost concealed from view. Flattened to the ground, she listened intently. The little she heard—stray exclamations, whisperings, soft, animal-like aspirations—was not encouraging.

The natives were watching, watching. They were watching with the combined zest of zealots and of children playing a game. Each man watched his neighbor, and all watched the ground in front of him, like tigers ready for the pounce.

Helen saw that she could go no farther without discovery. Then suddenly she tingled with hope. Somewhere to the right sounded confusion—a struggle, heavy blows, snarling, angry cries, significant imprecations in Ifugao.

She gathered from the cries that some one had been caught trying to break through the cordon, to interfere with the judgment of Umalgi. And instantly, as Umahog had foretold, the excitement spread. The natives were on their feet, jabbering, shouting, pressing in with horrible threats.

They almost stumbled over Helen, but in the nick of time she saved herself. She saved herself by crawling swiftly ahead, as Umahog had bidden her. And as she crawled there came from the right a loud cry, the Ifugao death-yell.

Helen had heard it before. And instantly she knew what Umahog had done. To make way for her, he had drawn the natives upon himself. And he had paid for his loyalty with his life.

He, the member of a race she nevermore could despise, had done this thing. With open eyes, knowing what was before him, he had gone to his death. For an instant weakness born mainly of pity, but somewhat of remorse, too, overcame Helen, and she almost fainted.

BUT it was with fresh courage drawn from Umahog's example that she finally steadied herself, and crept on.

She was now well within the forbidden circle, beyond sight of the natives. Presently she reached the crater. Here the vast pit dropped off abruptly, and she almost

Digitized by Google

fell over the edge. But she caught herself, and clung there for a moment, peering into the darkness, listening.

She heard a voice. Though she could not catch the words, her heart thrilled with sure recognition at the sound of it. It came from somewhere within the crater, to the left. She crawled swiftly around until the voice sounded directly below her.

During that journey, though it took but a moment, she became conscious of a thing that capped the climax on all the terrors of that night. That burnt-out crater, cold and dead for centuries, was apparently becoming active again. Hot, noxious air was rising from it. Smoke troubled her eyes, and she found herself breathing in gasps, as though she moved in a chimney flue.

Her brain reeled before a new and startling fear—fear of what seemed indeed beyond the natural—and she hesitated. Then she caught one word that came up from below, uttered in such a tone of love, of longing, of regret, as she had never imagined.

"Helen!"

She hesitated no longer. Deliberately, she let herself over into what might be a hell of fire. She released her hold, and found herself slipping down the steep incline. She tried to check the movement, but found nothing to lay hold of. Just as she gave herself up for lost, she brought up with a shock against a great boulder.

She lay there, dizzy and faint. Two things forced her back into activity. She was tortured, strangling, what with the smoke and the oxygenless air. And that beloved voice was very near now, so she could understand the words.

John Lansdale, seeing his end very close before him, and driven almost mad by fear for the woman he was leaving behind, was pouring out his soul in broken, stumbling sentences.

"Helen!—What will become of you?—In this desolate land, this incomprehensible land, alone!—Alone!—Good God, save her!"

Helen uttered a little cry. It was a cry of pity. From her own soul's experience, she knew the depth of his mental anguish. She crept around the boulder toward his voice, with fingers groping for the touch of him, and calling his name softly.

"John, John!"

Abruptly his voice ceased. She knew he had been shocked into a disbelief in his own sanity. And then suddenly she found him, her arms were around him, her lips were pressed to his.

"Sweetheart! Is it true? Are you real?"

"Yes, John, I—" Her hands were flying over the cords that bound him. What with a sudden emotional reaction, what with happiness to be with him and aiding him, she felt like laughing at his amazement.

"Great heavens, how—But you must get away. Save yourself. The fire is coming. The fire the *balians* kindled——"

"And leave you here! You don't mean that." She found two knotted ends in the stout *bejuco* cord and struggled with them frantically. From very near came a loud and ominous crackling.

"You can't do it in time. There's dead brushwood all below us. I heard a rock fall into it. It'll be like a furnace. It just started to burn a minute ago. Somehow the *balians* set it off after they'd gone, with a timed candle, maybe. They'll burn me alive, my body'll fall into the crater—gone—that's the judgment they prophesied. But you—get away while you can."

"We'll both get away." There was triumph in Helen's voice as she loosened the first of the knots. "And—I've been thinking—I've an idea. We'll both get away, but we'll come back. When the fire has burned itself down. When morning comes you'll be found bound just as the natives left you, with these same ropes, and—don't you see?—that'll be the answer they're looking for, and—there!"

John's hands were free.

Swiftly he threw aside the remainder of the lashings, and stood up. The heat was blistering, sparks drove past in a fiery shower, they were choked and smothered with smoke. A red radiance began to light up the crater, and through the surface of the tinder-like *debris* that almost filled it, tongues of flame began to dart.

"Come! This way! This is the way they brought me down." John caught Helen's wrist and urged her forward.

But with her free hand Helen seized the *bejuco* rope with which John had been tied.

It was a mad scramble upward. A stumbling, haphazard ascent, for the flaring light from below was uncertain, and they were too nearly blinded to pick their steps. But John knew the general direction of the rough trail down which he had been

Digitized by Google

carried. And they climbed with the fear of death pressing them from behind.

But presently the ascent grew less steep. Presently they were crawling on almost level ground, with the air growing purer around them. And then of a sudden they were descending again. They had crossed over the edge of the crater, and were safe on the mountainside.

That is, they were safe from the fire—the fire that was already lighting the sky behind them. But how could they win through that wall of watching Ifugaos, thrilled with the sight of a seeming miracle? How, if they did, could they explain their escape? How could John take up again the broken reins of his authority?

When John, who had hardly heeded Helen's excited words in the crater, puzzled over these question, Helen answered with a low and happy laugh.

"Pooh, you a soldier and strategist! I thought I'd told you. While the fire burns, we're safe. When it dies down we'll go back into the crater. I'll tie you as you were tied before, exactly. Then I'll hide and wait till they take you away. What will they think when they learn that the fire hasn't touched you, or your clothing, or the ropes with which you were bound."

"Some," grinned John after a moment, "will think there's been hocus-pocus."

"But the *balians*—what can they say? You've stood the test—you've passed the ordeal. Umalgi has spared you and elected you ruler. The ones that may be suspicious are the ones that have sense enough to be your friends already. Why, you can be king if you like—king of the Ifugaos!"

"And you?" queried John, in a voice grown suddenly wistful, filled with he only knew what of memories bitter-sweet, and new-born hope. "You, Helen? What——"

"I, dear heart!" murmured Helen, pressing closer. "Ah, I've learned something. I think the test of Umalgi was a double test. Your queen, dear—here or anywhere—as long as we live."

"IT'S remarkable," said a brigade commander in Manila some time later, "what that man Lansdale is doing in Kiagan. He has the natives working like Chinese on terraces and rice-paddies and things, and there hasn't been a tribal war reported in months. There's been nothing like it in my experience."

"Lansdale—a very reliable young man!" commented his adjutant. "Don't you remember him? He married Helen Wrengle, the daughter of——"

"Senator Wrengle's brother. By the Lord, I do remember it. I danced with her in Iloilo once. Lord, a charming woman—and the wife of a constabulary captain! I remember some of the ladies of the post rather took it out on her. But where is she now?"

"Where she should be, I suppose, enjoying domestic felicity."

"What! Not in Kiagan!"

"Sure! It was a nine-days' wonder in Iloilo, but she went along. I suppose neither of them knew how absolutely bad it would be. But she stuck it out."

"Good Lord; that woman in Kiagan. Why she—she's a marvel, sir. The luck of some of these infernal cubs! But with her family influence, why haven't they—I haven't heard of any wire-pulling."

"There hasn't been any," replied the adjutant.

"A proud cuss, I suppose. There are that kind—tomfoolery! But he's an infernally good workman, and, as I remember him, a man that would fit like a glove into any officer's mess. And Helen Lansdale in Kiagan—no, it's not thinkable. Let's have Lansdale's record."

And a few minutes later the brigade commander dictated a very unofficial letter to a certain personage in Washington, certain sentences of which follow:

. . . So I sincerely believe that with changing conditions out here, a new type of regular officer is needed, young men, possibly from the ranks, or better still from the constabulary—but at any rate, men who have been forced by their work to live with natives almost as equals, and to get their point of view. For they have a point of view, don't doubt it.

All of which, as you've probably begun to surmise, is by way of gracefully leading up to a request. There's a certain young constabulary captain in the northern division, John Lansdale by name. . . . I happen to know there are three lieutenancies vacant. . . . It isn't necessary for you to show him any favoritism—just clear the way for him to take the examination and he'll pass like a rocket.

I want you to know I'm on the extreme end of this string. He has strings in his own hand, but he won't pull them. Both of which facts—his strings and his stubbornness—are, I admit, influencing me in this action.

Digitized by Google

TEN MILLION EMS OF NONPAREIL

by William Carlton Davis

"I'M THROUGH."

John Trib put all the emphasis he could into a voice that was just breaking to the throaty tones of budding manhood. There was just a suggestion of quiver and, at the finish, a little squeak.

The man addressed looked up from a proof he was reading.

"Through?" he echoed.

"Yes! I'm done! I'm quittin' this joint." His lips shook with anger and indignation.

"What's the matter?"

"They's a whole lot the matter. I come here to learn the printin' business. I ben here two weeks now, and I ain't done nothin' but set nonpareil pi out of the hell-box. The dirty, stinkin' little type! I'm sick of it. Gimme what's comin' to me. I'm a-gonna quit."

"Why, Johnnie; don't get sore. That's the way we always start the devil."

"Wall, I am sore—good an' sore. I wouldn't 'a' cared if you gimme long primer or pica or something. But this here nonpareil! It's like pickin' up pins. Look at my fingers—all cracked and bleedin'. I hate it; and I hate the man what invented the pesky little type. When I git a line of it up it falls down. No wonder the hell-box is full of it. It won't stay put."

Though he perhaps didn't know it, John Trib was telling no new story. He was but voicing the opinion every beginner—the "devil"—in a printing office has of nonpareil, which has a penchant for falling down, or "pieing," and thus exemplifying the total depravity of inanimate objects.

Nonpareil is a trifle smaller than the type in which this story appears. Though there are smaller sizes than nonpareil, it is the smallest type in general use. As John said, it was no wonder the hell-box—that catch-all of the printing office—was full of it. Once pied, no printer cares to waste his time and spoil his temper by sorting it. Hence, it goes into the time-honored hell-box, where the printing-office devil takes his first step toward becoming a compositor—a type-sticker.

"I wanted to be a type-sticker," continued young Trib, "but if I'd 'a' knowed they was such all-fired type as nonpareil you couldn't 'a' got me near a print shop. I was a good boy when I come here. I didn't swear nor nothin'. Now I swear like ——. I can't help it. It's that nonpareil's fault, and the man what invented it."

There were big tears of vexation in the young blue eyes.

The boss regarded him a moment, while John was trying to keep his lips from quivering.

"I didn't know you felt that way about it, Johnnie. Here, I'll tell you what I'll do. You stay and I'll put you at something else. You can tackle the pica case. How'll that——"

"No; it's too late," broke in John. "I tell yeh I'm through. I couldn't never learn this business now—not now. They'd always be nonpareil, and—I——"

His voice broke and he turned away to

Digitized by Google

brush off two big drops that were trickling down his cheeks.

"Oh, well, if you feel that way about it, why—here's your money."

He threw the coin on the table.

John took the three big dollars in his hand. And when he had his week's wages under his fingers his nerve came back with a jerk. Such is the power of wealth.

"I'm a-goin' t' git even," he shouted. "I'm a-goin' t' git even on the dirty, sneakin' little type. I'll think up a way, you see if I don't."

And he strode out, holding aloft in his clenched fist, three dollars, coin of the realm.

FORTY years had reeled off the roll of time since that fateful day when John Trib decided that there were probably other occupations for which he might be fitted, than setting type.

When he left the printing office at the age of sixteen years, his sole worldly possessions consisting of three silver dollars and the clothing he wore, he had formed no definite plan of vengeance, nor did he have much of a notion what he would do. Vaguely he felt that there was some method by which he might hew out a fortune, and while so doing he would find time to formulate a plan by which he could square accounts with nonpareil.

Curiously enough he felt no resentment against the employer he had left. But he was imbued with a magnificent hate against nonpareil type. He felt that it had tricked him and mocked him. And he would repay if it were the last act of his life. That was a fixed purpose, and it never left him.

A YOUNG lady was busy at her typewriter in the business office of a modern printing plant.

The door opened and a tall, sparsely-built man edged in. He walked up to the counter.

"I want to see the boss," he said, speaking with some effort.

"What name, please?"

"Oh, he wouldn't know me," was the weary response. "Jes' tell him that a man wants some type set—nonpareil."

The girl disappeared into the manager's private office. Emerging a moment later she said—

"Mr. Renler is busy; he'll be out in a moment."

"All right. I'll set if you don't mind, miss."

"Sure; sit down." She went back to her typewriter.

The visitor looked about him. He saw the adding machine, the big safe, the desk phone, the electric fan, the modern office equipment, and his memory harked back to the dingy little office that had occupied the same site forty years ago.

Things is kinder changed since I worked here," he ventured.

"When was that?" asked the girl, without looking up.

"About forty years ago."

"Oh! I wasn't here." She smiled.

"No; I reckon you wasn't no place—then." His eyes twinkled.

The business manager, correctly dressed and wearing a button-hole bouquet, appeared.

"Did you wish to see me?" he asked of the visitor.

"Are you the boss?"

"I suppose so. What is it?"

"You don't mind me settin' down while I talk, do you? I'm a mite tired."

"Oh, no; that's all right. What can we do for you?"

"Got plenty of nonpareil type?"

"Yes; I think so," with a satisfied smile.

"I got a big job of type-stickin'," warned the old man.

"Can't come too big for us. How much?"

"Ten million ems, solid." He almost barked it.

"What is it—a book?" He reached for an estimate blank.

"No, it ain't no book. Jes' want the type set."

"All right; but we're in the printing business, and can do your work as cheaply as anybody—cheaper, in fact. Our plant——"

"They won't be no printin'," was the very decided retort.

"No printing? What's the idea?" The young man was plainly astonished.

"I'll tell you when the time comes. What I want to know now is whether you can do the type-stickin'."

"Absolutely." The young man was emphatic for the first time.

"Now you're talkin'. Now, listen to me, son."

"Shoot."

Digitized by Google

"I want ten million ems of nonpareil set solid, same measure as a newspaper column. I know it'll cost a lot of money. But I've got it. You figure it up."

The young man did a lot of rapid thinking as he eyed the aged stranger. He wondered whether the old fellow in the chair, looking anything but robust, was a crank. That is, he wondered for the fraction of a second and then reached the decision that he was.

"Got your copy ready?" he asked abruptly.

"I aim to have it ready," was the curt reply.

"When will you want this work?"

"Ain't no hurry; leastwise, no special hurry."

"Expect to take the type away with you?"

"Not by a whole lot. It'll stay right here," decidedly.

"It'll cost you something."

"I'm listenin', son."

"This is an unusual order," fenced the manager, "and you haven't really given me any details—style, etc."

"Jes' plain type-stickin', son, that's all. I've told you the whole thing."

"Except what it's for," he ventured.

"That's my secret—now. Go on with your figurin'."

The young manager bent over a pad and figured rapidly.

"Let's see, this is the fifth," he said, glancing at a calendar. "How will the thirtieth do?"

"Fine. But if you get that much type set by the thirtieth you've got the fastest bunch of compositors I ever saw."

"Oh, we're fixed for any sort of a job," he swelled. "A few million ems more or less doesn't matter to us. On a pinch we could deliver this by the fifteenth. But we'll make it the thirtieth if that suits you. Now, as to cost. First, is this a competitive job?"

"How do you mean?"

"Are you getting figures elsewhere?"

"No, and I don't mind telling you that I don't aim to. I worked in this office forty years ago, when I was only a kid. There's reasons why I want the work done here. Some day I'll tell you all about it."

A little sigh of relief escaped the business manager.

"Well, the regular rate for composition on straight matter is forty cents a thousand, but for such a big order——"

"Fair enough. I wouldn't ask no man to stick nonpareil for less."

It would not have mattered to him had he known that the interruption cost him two hundred and fifty dollars; that he stopped the business manager on the verge of giving him a price of thirty-seven and one-half cents a thousand.

"Let's see," continued the old man, "that comes to just four thousand dollars even, don't it?"

"That's right; four thousand even."

The old man reached into his pocket and drew out a check-book. He remained seated.

"Got a pen?" he asked.

The business manager came from behind the counter and handed him a fountain pen.

The man in the chair took it between his fingers with an inquiring glance at the young man and a curious scrutiny of the pen.

"Ain't you got no ink?"

"There's ink in it—fountain pen."

The old man was incredulous.

"You ain't foolin' me, son?"

"Try it, old-timer."

Gingerly he touched the point of the face of the check. A dot of ink resulted. He smiled, and then wrote the first word of the date.

"Well, dang me if it don't write."

He chuckled gleefully, until a cough choked back his merriment.

He finished writing the check in a trembling hand and passed it to the business manager.

"There you are, son—my check for a thousand dollars. Here's my little book, showin' I've got a few thousand more in the bank. When you git a thousand dollars' worth of type set, I'll have another for you."

"Oh, John Trib," said Fenler as he read the check. "Happy to meet you, Mr. Trib. Fenler is my name." They shook hands.

"I'll be goin' now, son. I'll drop around occasionally to see how things is comin' on."

He rose to go. Trib was plainly tired. He swayed as he went toward the door.

Fenler paled as he saw a four-thousand-dollar order tottering.

"Are you ill?" he asked in genuine con-

Digitized by Google

cern, as he hurried to the side of his customer.

"No; jes' tired," said Trib, trying to suppress a cough. "I'll be all right after I get rested. Good-by."

"Good-by, Mr. Trib. Take care of yourself."

The young business manager helped his customer to the sidewalk, where they shook hands. Fenler watched Trib disappear around the corner. The check was still in his hand as he stepped back into the office and rang up the bank designated. He soon learned that the name of John Trib at the bottom of a check, provided he put it there himself, was good for almost any amount in four figures.

Fenler gave the check a little flick with his finger and smiled.

The smile suddenly vanished and gave place to a look of concern.

"Trib didn't leave any copy!" he exclaimed, looking at the stenographer as though she might have copy for ten million ems of nonpareil concealed about her person.

He looked the check over hurriedly. Evidently it was a real honest-to-goodness check, worth its thousand-dollar face. No mistake about Trib. The cashier had described him—tall, thin, stooped, pale, with blue eyes and a protruding chin. And he didn't appear well. There was a little pink spot on each cheek, and he had a cough. That was Trib.

"Did Trib say where he was stopping?" to the stenographer.

"No. Ask the bank."

The phone rang. The business manager reached for the receiver impatiently.

"Hello," he snapped. "Yes, this is the printing office—Fenler talking—Oh, hello, Mr. Trib"—with a quick change of voice. "What's that?—I don't get you—Hel——"

After listening a moment he turned to the stenographer.

"I can hear him coughing like an engine on an up-grade. Guess—Hello. Trib? Yes—Fenler—Copy in the morning. All right. I was wondering—We start at eight—All right. Good-by."

"Says he'll have copy in the morning. Fine and dandy. What do you make of him, Miss Shaw?"

"If you ask me, I think he's a nut."

"Maybe he is; but this check for a thousand don't look so awful foolish to me." He tensed it between his two hands and then gave it an affectionate little flick with his fingers.

"Ring for the foreman."

The young woman pressed a button, and in a moment a scholarly young man appeared.

"How's the hook, Frank?"

"We'll have it about cleaned off tomorrow."

"Good. I've got an order for ten million ems six-point, straight composition, thirteen measure. How many machines can you put on it?"

"When do you want it?"

"By the thirtieth."

"Book?"

"No. Here's the dope: an old guy with a cough came in here and ordered ten million ems of six-point—nonpareil, he calls it—set thirteen measure. Wants it delivered in one batch. He doesn't want any printing. I think he's a little off. But he paid a thousand dollars down, and the bank says he's good for the rest. I charged him forty cents straight."

"It'll take an awful lot of metal—several tons. Better lay in a supply."

"That'll be good business, at that. The war is sending metal up, and it will advance fifty per cent. in thirty days. We should worry."

"How about copy?"

"He just phoned that he would have copy in the morning."

"I can put four machines on it tomorrow—eight if there is any great rush."

JOHN TRIB reached the printing office the following morning with copy. He laid a large wad of it on the counter.

"I guess that'll keep your type-stickers busy for a while," he said.

The bundle of copy consisted of column after column of stuff clipped from the daily papers, pasted on white sheets.

"How about heads?" asked Fenler, looking over the mass.

"Don't want 'em," declared Trib.

"You're the doctor. But this won't last long."

"I'll have more tomorrow. Guess I can keep up with your type-stickers."

"They eat this up pretty fast. Like to see them at work?"

Digitized by Google

"No; not now. I'll be ready for that later," wearily.

"By the way; how long do you want to keep this standing."

"Not long, young feller; not long," was the significant response. And then, as if to change the subject—"I'd like to set down a while, if you don't mind. I don't seem to have the strength I used to. I'm sort of tired all the time."

He had a spasm of coughing.

"Got a little cold, maybe," suggested Fenler, with a show of anxiety.

"Guess that's about it."

After a moment's reflection, the young business manager continued——

"We can hurry this job along if you like."

"Well, said Trib, after a little study, "maybe it would be just as well if you put a couple of more men to work and hurried it—a mite."

"I'll attend to it at once. Were you ever in the printing business, Mr. Trib?"

"Not exactly. I was a printing-office devil for a spell—two weeks."

"Didn't like it?"

"Would you like to stick nonpareil pi all day out of the hell-box?" asked Trib, petulantly.

Fenler saw that it was a subject Trib did not care to discuss, and he refrained from further questions. At the same time, Trib rose to go.

"I'm stoppin' at the Regulus Hotel, if you want me," he announced.

"I was going to ask you about that. And another thing—how about proofs? Do you wish to read the proofs?"

"Proofs!" exclaimed Trib, with a blank look. "Don't know as I thought about proofs. I'll look 'em over, I guess," he said wearily.

"We'll have a bunch of them tomorrow for you."

"Well—" He hesitated. "The proofs don't matter so much, nohow."

Trib started for the door, abstractedly, slowly, haltingly. Taking hold of the door-knob he turned to Fenler.

"Better tell those type-stickers to pull out; no soljering on this job."

He smiled faintly.

"All right, Mr. Trib. I'll tell them to speed up."

And Trib went out, coughing.

TRIB did not put in an appearance the next day. In the afternoon a messenger brought a note to the effect that he was feeling so tired and worn out that he had decided to stay indoors and rest. He sent some more copy, however —columns of clippings from the daily papers.

Fenler gave the messenger a lot of proofs to take back for Trib's perusal.

Nothing was heard from Trib the following day. The business manager of the printing plant was worried. He was minded to call, but as he had plenty of copy he put it off until the next morning, when the messenger again brought a note. It read:

I won't be down today. I'm kind of sick and weak. Nothing serious, though. I just need a rest. Hustle those type-stickers. Here's another bunch of copy. If you run short, just slash a lot out of the papers. I ain't particular about it. The proofs are O. K. Inclosed find another check for a thousand.

"Queer old codger," mused Fenler, after reading the note. He's got an awful grouch at nonpareil, as he calls it. I don't think he's going to last long. That cough sounds like the last sad rites. But he wants this job hurried, and so do I. I wonder what he's going to do with that type. I can't figure his grouch at six-point. I feel sorry for the old geezer. Seems to me he's spending his money foolishly, and I hate to take it."

Then Fenler went out and cashed the check. Returning to the office he ordered four more machines put on the job, and with the help of the stenographer cut out a wad of copy from old newspapers.

"He never looked at those proofs," said Fenler to Miss Shaw. "There isn't a mark on 'em. I've got eight machines on the job now and working double shift. It means two thousand galleys of type, figuring five thousand ems to the galley. It will tax our storage capacity, and the metal bill will be a fright. At that we'll make a clean-up on the job, and have a fine lot of metal to boot. Just naturally laying in a stock at Trib's expense. We should worry. Type metal is going up since the war broke out, and we'll have it to sell. I think I ought to get a raise in my salary when the owners get back from their vacation and find out what I've done."

Digitized by Google

"You've sure got it coming," agreed Miss Shaw.

Fenler dropped around to the Regulus the following day to have a talk with Trib. He found him feverishly cutting copy from old newspapers, which were littered about him knee deep. He seemed very weak and spent much of his time coughing horribly.

"I've jes' got to get this job done, young feller," he said, with all the spirit he could muster. "I don't allow I'm goin' to last much longer. I've got my heart set on a certain thing, and I won't die happy unless——"

A paroxysm of coughing shook his emaciated frame, leaving him spent and helpless. Fenler assisted the stricken man to a lounge, where he lay weakly.

"Thank you, son," he said, almost in a whisper. "How's the boys doin'?"

"Fine. I've got eight Mergenthalers on it, working two shifts. I'll give you the last proof in another week."

"That's bully. I don't think I ever heard of the Mergenthaler boys, but I can see they're almighty fast type-stickers."

"Boys!" exclaimed Fenler. "Why, they're not boys, they're m——"

"Course, they ain't boys," interrupted Trib. "Boys wouldn't be such swifts. I might of known they was men."

Fenler started.

"Can it be possible," he thought, "that Trib has never heard of type-setting machines?"

"Where did you come from, Mr. Trib?" he asked suddenly.

"From Nebraska, originally. But I been out West mining for forty year—up in the mountains. I ain't seen much. I made a little pile. I'm here to spend it my own way, and I reckon—I ain't—got—much—time."

That was patent.

"You wouldn't be happy unless you saw that all in type before—it was—too late, would you, Mr. Trib?" He spoke in a kindly tone.

"I wouldn't that, son."

"I'll hurry it, Mr. Trib." He spoke with decision.

"I'd be obliged to you, son; I would so."

"Leave it to me, old-timer. You just stay here and rest. I'm going now, to hustle those printers along. Good-by."

He grasped the listless hand for a moment, and then hurried away. He heard Trib coughing as he left the room and it spurred him on.

Fenler burst into the office and hurried into the composing-room.

"Run those machines three shifts," he shouted to the foreman. "I'll keep you supplied with copy. Don't stop to correct errors. Tell the men to work like ——. There's a twenty-dollar bonus to the high man each shift."

He handed the foreman a wad of copy which he distributed among the eight machines. Back to the office he came swiftly. He turned to the stenographer.

"This is a race, Miss Shaw—with Death! Get Doctor Harold on the phone. Tell him to get to this office on the jump. Never mind the speed limits; I'll pay his fine."

The girl obeyed, and in a moment announced that the doctor was on the way.

Fenler and the stenographer cut copy waiting for the physician. Presently the physician arrived. He rushed in with his case in his hand.

"Somebody sick?"

"Not here. Listen. I'm going to take you to see a man. I think he's on his last legs. Don't look or act like a doctor. He isn't to know. I'll introduce you as my partner in the printing business. Give him the once over and tell me how long he can live."

They jumped into the machine.

"Where to?" shouted the doctor as the engine started to roar.

"The Regulus."

They sped for the hotel.

Trib was dressed, but lying on the bed when they arrived.

"This is my partner—Mr. Harold, Mr. Trib."

Harold took Trib's hand in his, albeit his grasp of it was more professional than friendly.

"How are you feeling, Mr. Trib?" he asked.

"Sort of poorly. Seem to lost all holts. I think I'll be all right, though, soon's I get over this cough." He gave a sample.

"Yes, I think so," was the significant response of the doctor.

"I'm going to have my partner visit you frequently while you're—resting up, Mr. Trib. He'll keep you informed of the progress of the work. I'll be right on the job myself, keeping the boys hustling."

Digitized by Google

"I'll be right glad of that, son. It's sort of lonely here."

They bade him good-by and left the room. Neither spoke until they had reached the street.

"Well, how about it, Doc?" asked Fenler.

"Last stages of consumption. May live a week or a month. He may not wake up tomorrow morning. I can't tell for sure —nobody can. Tuberculosis has its idiosyncrasies. Much depends on Trib himself — his tenacity, his determination to live."

"Good news. Trib has an overpowering desire to see ten million ems of nonpareil in type before he dies. I'll put the last proofs in his hand Saturday night."

"Did you tell him that?"

"Yes."

"He'll live—till then."

"Fine. You sort of stick around, Doc, and do what you can for him. Don't let him know you're a doctor unless it becomes absolutely necessary."

"Leave it to me. This is a case where jollying will do more good than medicine."

SATURDAY morning Fenler dropped around to Trib's room. The doctor met him at the door.

"How is he, Doc?" he asked anxiously.

"He'll stick. He's been asking for you. Wants to know how the job is coming on."

"I'll deliver the last proofs this afternoon. We had to sweat blood, though, to do it. All the boys are worn out, and I'm about all in myself."

They went in. Trib was propped up in bed. He smiled wanly as Fenler took his hand.

"How's it coming, son?"

"I'll give you the last proofs tonight."

"Sure enough?" wistfully.

"Sure enough."

A smile of complete satisfaction—the satisfaction of a little child, spread over the face of John Trib. For a few moments he was lost in contemplation. Presently he looked up into the face of Fenler, standing by his bed.

"I can tell you now, young feller, what I want to do with that type."

"I'm listening, John." With all his ears he was listening.

"I'm goin' to pi the whole —— works!"

"Pi it! My ——! Why, man, you can't——"

"Won't you let me, son?"

He seemed terrified.

"Let you—yes. But——"

"I'm weak, I know. But I can start it, and you can finish it, can't you. I'll pay." He reached out both hands for Fenler's.

Fenler, standing aghast, did some quick thinking. Evidently Trib supposed the type was hand-set. He didn't know that it had been set by machines—probably had never heard of them. Didn't know that each line was a solid slug that couldn't be pied—not the way Trib wanted to pi it.

"I've lived for this day, Mr. Fenler," pleaded Trib. "I've worked hard and saved my money. I waited until I was sure I had enough to have ten million ems of nonpareil set so I could push it all over. I know it will make a lot of trouble for you —sortin' it out of the hell-box. But I've got money for that, too. There's my check on the table for two thousand dollars. That pays for the settin' up. My blank check is there too, for the rest—a thousand or so more. You draw it out today. Give me a decent burial and keep the rest after you're paid for your trouble. Give your office devil a couple of hundred with my compliments. I've always felt sorry for printers' devils. All the rest is yours. I don't leave no kin."

He had been speaking rapidly and with great effort. He stopped for a breathing spell.

"I'm awful weak, and I don't know as I can get up. Can't you bring a few galleys of type here so I can start to pi it? You and the devil can finish it. I sort of suspect he'd like to do it, anyhow."

"I'll bring a few galleys with the proofs this afternoon," exclaimed Fenler, relieved and delighted. "You rest up now and don't worry."

"Thank you, son." It was almost fervent.

Fenler hurried away. He raced to the printing office, rushed into the composing-room and yelled to the foreman:

"Hand-set eight of those galleys. Put every available man on 'em. If we haven't the type or the men, have some of it done in other print shops. Rush it. The bonus still goes. Don't stop for proofs. Bring the eight galleys to room 123, Regulus

Digitized by Google

Hotel. Bring a lot of the machine-set type, too. Better bring it all."

"All of it? Say, do you know there's fifteen tons of it?"

"Fifteen tons! Holy mackerel. At ten cents a pound——"

"Don't fret. We got notice this morning of a three-cent advance. It'll go higher before the war is over. You're in luck."

"Bully. Well, bring all you and the boys can lug. Remember, room 123, Regulus. I want it in two hours."

He bolted for his car and sped for the hotel. Up the stairs he went, three steps at a time, and raced along the hall to Trib's room. Reverently removing his hat he strode quietly inside.

Trib greeted him with a faint smile.

"How's she coming, son?"

"Everything's all right. The boys will be here in two hours with the type."

Trib reached out a bony hand and Fenler took it in his two.

"When it comes I can pi it?"

"You bet—every last letter of it."

Trib patted the young man's hand.

"I been waiting for this," he murmured. "It'll be a regular nonpareil spree."

"Better get a little rest, Mr. Trib, while waiting for the boys."

"I'm just a little mite tired," admitted the patient. "If I happen to fall asleep you'll wake me up?"

"Trust us for that," they both assured him.

Trib settled back in the pillows and closed his eyes. Like a tired child he lay there, his thin body hardly showing under the bedding.

"Will he—stick?" anxiously inquired Fenler of the doctor.

"Until he pies that type," assured the doctor. "That is all that is keeping him alive."

FENLER alternated between looking out the window and nervously pacing up and down about the room. Frequently he consulted his watch. Neither he nor the doctor spoke for more than an hour.

Occasionally they saw Trib's eyelids lift for a moment.

After nearly two hours they heard footsteps in the hall. The sick man's eyes opened wide. He had been the first to hear.

"Maybe the boys are coming," he said, wetting his lips with his tongue.

There was a knock and Fenler stepped to the door.

"The hand-set first," he whispered to the foreman.

The foreman beckoned to seven others, each of whom carried a galley of happiness for the dying man. They filed into the room and ranged themselves about the bed. A score or more of printers followed, each with two galleys of machine-set type.

Trib, all excitement, was coughing frightfully, as he tried to speak. Presently he recovered control of his vocal cords.

"There it is," he almost screamed. "Let me get my hands into it."

He had raised up on one elbow, and one long white arm was stretching toward the group, with the lean fingers clasping and unclasping, like a claw.

The withered lungs, working at forced pressure, had put power into his voice, which rose shrill and piercing above the roar of street traffic that filtered into the room. One of the startled printers accidentally let some type slide off the galley. It rattled to the floor.

"Hah! Here's where I git even. Bring it t' me. Nonpareil! The dirty, sneakin' little type. I been settin' it out o' the hell-box fer two weeks. I'm a-goin' to fill all the hell-boxes from here t' Kingdom Come. Bring it here—bring——"

The sick man had been a-tremble with excitement. His eyes were wide and staring. Perspiration stood out on his forehead in little beads. His face was ghastly, with a little pink spot on either cheek. His great gaunt shoulders were shaking and his body seemed to dwindle away from them into nothing but a little ridge in the bed.

The effort was too much for him, and he fell back on the pillows.

Fenler started toward him. The doctor motioned him back.

"We can do nothing. Just wait. Maybe he'll come back. Maybe not. The excitement was too much for him."

Some of the men laid their burdens down on tables or chairs. Not the men with the hand-set type. That might pi unless they held and guarded it. They were saving that for Trib.

Presently Trib's hand began to move; his eyes opened. The hand reached toward Fenler, who took it gently.

Digitized by Google

"Where—is—it?"

Fenler motioned to one of the men. He stepped forward with a galley of type and Fenler placed the bony hand in contact with it.

Trib's body tensed as though galvanized by an electric shock. His claw-like fingers closed over the type, his thin lips compressed, and with strength almost unbelievable he lifted a handful of the metal and hurled it from him.

The type rattled against the furniture and scattered over the carpet.

Again he reached for a handful of type, his face set and grim and his eyes bright with the hot fires of consuming disease—and vengeance.

A galley of the hated nonpareil was soon scattered within the small radius of his remaining strength.

"More. I ain't hardly started." The bony fingers reached out.

Fenler motioned to the others to come forward with their galleys of type.

Trib reached into it with his two hands. He pushed it over or scattered it about his bed with all the savagery he could muster. The while he muttered imprecations to the type.

"Fall down, dang yeh! I'll show yeh! nasty, stinkin' little type! T' —— with yeh!"

With every exclamation he lifted a handful of the type and flung the pi around.

"How'm I a-doin', son?"

"You're just doing bully, John." Fenler's eyes were brimming.

Trib soon became so spent that he could hardly raise his hands. He weakly shoved the type off the galleys, and the printers helped, by so slanting the galleys that gravitation aided John Trib in his vengeance.

"I'm gittin' pretty tired, son," he said at last. "Is they—much—more?"

"Just a little more, John," he mercifully lied.

"I been—at it—a—long—time." The voice trailed off into a breath.

Trib's eyes closed. Fenler motioned for the doctor. He approached and lifted the tired hand by the wrist. The pulse was fluttering. The doctor shook his head and let the hand fall gently.

The men stood by, quietly and reverently. Some of them were sobbing. One or two stole out. It was more than they could bear.

Presently Trib's lips moved. Those near the bed bent forward to hear.

"I'm quittin'!" The words were barely audible.

The thin fingers were groping about as though to find something.

The last galley of hand-set type was placed within reach of the groping hand. The fingers twined about the type, and the man who held the galley tilted it. The type clattered to the floor.

"I'm—through," whispered Trib.

A little sigh escaped through the thin lips, a ghost of a smile showed in his face. With that sigh went the tired soul of John Trib. A lifeless arm slid over the edge of the bed until the dead fingers rested in a heap of nonpareil pi.

Digitized by Google

IMITATIONS

by Pierre de Lanux and Lawton Mackall

"THIS bracelet seems to interest you, Monsieur Régnaud."

The tall Frenchman raised his eyes quickly and made a gesture of apology, saying:

"I ask your pardon, madame. I did not mean to be rude. Those wonderful antique pearls, gleaming there upon your white arm, made me for a moment disloyal to the charms of your face. But do not be displeased."

"Oh, I'm not," replied Mrs. Dawson, laughing gaily behind her fan. "I'm only amused that you should be so easily taken in."

"Taken in?" he repeated, at a loss.

"Other people here this evening have admired it—that stout woman over there near the palms even asked me whether I got it at Tiffany's or at Dreicer's—but I did not think that you would be deceived by it!"

She wickedly made the most of his disconcertion.

"Yes," she continued merrily, "the pearls are false. I wear them occasionally for the lark of it. It is so much fun having people admire them and take them for real."

"And you are positive they are not genuine?"

"Why certainly. The little shopkeeper in Spain, from whom I bought them, admitted as much. And I paid only a few dollars. I got them for a joke on my husband. When I brought them home, he had a shock—thought I had squandered the family fortune. Even after I told him, he wouldn't rest till he had taken them to experts."

"And they said——?"

"That the pearls were false, of course."

This time it was Monsieur Régnaud who smiled, and she who looked puzzled.

"What are you thinking?" she asked impulsively.

"I was thinking," he replied suavely, "that the experts sometimes make mistakes, and the shopkeepers are sometimes very—*modest*."

"I don't quite understand."

"Then let me tell you a story of a strange thing that happened in my country not long ago.

ONE DAY a man was wandering idly, without purpose, through the streets of Paris. He was respectably dressed, as one would say, and of powerful physique, but there was something in his appearance that showed Joseph Sénèque to be a ne'er-do-well.

Only yesterday he had been bookkeeper in one of the reputable shops. It was the third real position he had held in his life. First when he was yet under twenty, he had been a clerk in a business house; then, after a few years, he had been instructor of gymnastics; and then, for the greatest time, the bookkeeper, as I have said. He

Digitized by Google

was simply a man with tastes and passions like us all, but without an aptitude for anything.

He wandered on and on, sullenly. At times he would clench his fists and tears would come to his eyes. The bridges of the Seine began to tempt him.

In his bitterness he cursed himself for not having taken advantage of his last position. Why had he not quietly diverted some of the money in the cash-drawer? There had been opportunity. On the wall in front of his desk had hung a placard with a motto saying one must never put off till tomorrow. Yet, from foolish hesitation he had done nothing.

And yesterday he was suddenly dismissed—not for any wrong action but just for a small error in the books—only a pen mistake, which did not even harm his employer. He had made many such errors before, and they had never seemed to matter; but now they were all held against him. He was judged incapable of accuracy. They had discharged him—"honorably!" He had not felt the bitterness of it until he was out on the street, alone.

Now his rancor was at the full. It was not an animosity directed against a particular enemy. It was a terrible hate without an object; the revulsion of a pessimist who loathes his pessimism and yet sees no way out of it.

Bridges, quays, then the Rue du Louvre. You remember that street, madame; it is at the east end of the great museum. The air is cold. Rain begins to fall. The first drop that strikes his face causes a shock of revolt. Even the elements are against him. Like a hunted animal he takes refuge inside the entrance of the museum. He looks about with wild eyes.

All at once a reckless agressiveness takes hold of him. He straightens up as though casting off a useless burden. He is electrified with a sudden resolve to free himself from his fate by some bold action. Shaking the water from his hat, he exclaims, half aloud:

"*Nom de chien!* I'll do *something* for once in my life!"

A guard, with his hands behind his back, approaches, and Sénèque instinctively moves on.

The door leading to the Egyptian Antiquities stands open. He enters. He strides through deserted rooms. He boldly ascends a stairway, of which the steps resound to his tread as they would to the tread of an emperor—even more, for Joseph Sénèque has hobnailed shoes.

The insurgent reaches the famous Gallery of Apollo, in the center of which—under their glass and surrounded by their iron railing—sleep the Crown Jewels. Inside this railing is sleeping also the special guard. The only other persons in sight are a family of tourists. They are over in the far corner, looking at the Medici Casket and arguing as to whether it is made of real gold.

Sénèque approaches the jewels. He sees crowns and other adornments of royalty, and, still more wonderful, the great "Regent," the diamond that is supposed to be the most valuable in all the world.

Here is his opportunity. Before him is immense wealth in the most compact and portable form. He has but to reach out and seize it—if he dares.

But today he dares anything. A crash of glass, his hand snatches the diamond, and the former instructor of gymnastics makes off as fast as his legs will carry him. Leaping down the stairway three steps at a time, he shoves the jewel into his trousers pocket.

Downstairs in the vestibule, the guard is arguing with a strong-minded Englishwoman who refuses to give up her umbrella for checking. He reads to her in a loud voice the regulations of the museum, and is so excited that with each word his glasses fall from his nose. So Sénèque slips quietly by, darts out into the street, and is soon lost in the crowd.

Meanwhile the Cerberus of the jewels, waked as though by a thunder-clap, goes frantic. He springs over the railing, trips, falls, cuts his finger on a splinter of the broken glass, stops an instant to suck it, then gallops like a stampeded mule through the gallery, which has suddenly begun to echo with excited cries. The family of tourists huddle close together like frightened birds when the cat approaches the cage. An electric alarm, which has been carefully tested each day, now rings in the private office of the curator, giving that poor gentleman almost a failure of the heart, but without hindering the flight of the thief.

The tumult grows and grows. Officials telephone wildly. Armies of policemen arrive, search the building from top to

Digitized by Google

bottom, guard every door, and arrest many innocent visitors, especially the scared tourist family.

And then the evening papers appear, announcing in big letters:

AMAZING ROBBERY

"REGENT" VANISHES FROM LOUVRE

UNKNOWN THIEF MAKES OFF WITH FAMOUS GEM. A CLUE

But they forget to mention that their clue leads nowhere.

THE fun of grinning at theories and conjectures in the newspapers is very agreeable, but it does not prevent hunger. Joseph Sénèque is starving. Each day he reads new absurdities and each day he feels a sharper pain in his stomach. What shall he do? Misery is not more easy to endure because one possesses a pebble worth fifteen million francs.

Sénèque thinks, thinks all the time—when he is sitting in his room, when he is walking on the street, when he is lying in bed—but he becomes always more perplexed. Often he goes to sleep murmuring:

"I've got a fortune. I'm a millionaire—and I'm not the first of them who began crookedly——"

After a quarter of an hour he wakes, with a cruel ache, and exclaims—

"What would I not give for a piece of beefsteak!"

All he can do to pacify himself is to draw out the diamond from the hole in the mattress, where he has hidden it, and feel it with his hands in the dark.

One day a newspaper offers forty thousand francs to whoever will put the police on the right track. It is not required that he go so far as to reveal the culprit: he has only to start the detectives in the proper direction—as one says to a child playing find-the-thimble—

"This way! Getting warmer!"

Forty thousand francs to any one who will say: "Getting warmer!"

Sénèque shrugs his shoulders. The promise of the newspaper sounds all right. But for him, to start people on the track. . . .

He feels greatly the need of an accomplice in whom he can confide for advice. The desire for such a one is almost as great as his hunger. Sénèque would like to stop and say to the lamp-post, to the bench on the boulevard, to the horse that stands chewing his oats:

"Here, I've got this, and I don't know what to do with it. Give me advice!"

Should he break it into pieces? But then what about the *cut?*

He might sell the smallest fragment to some receiver of stolen goods, fit himself out with new clothes; then sell a larger piece to a jeweler, take lodgings in a hotel under a foreign name, and launch out into society; and finally he might offer the largest piece to some rich and beautiful woman, declaring he had stolen it for her sake.

Such are the imaginings of a hunger-distracted brain. But gradually a definite plan takes shape. He must find a dishonest jeweler.

This, you will understand, is not easy; because one does not have the word "dishonest" painted on the front of his shop. And for Sénèque to suppose an honest jeweler dishonest, is to be immediately arrested. So he looks and looks in all parts of Paris, but is continually afraid.

At last, however—thanks to a remark which he happens to overhear from the conversation of two vagabonds—he finds a shop that looks safe. He enters, still hesitating, but is taken into the back room, and talks with the jeweler. Next he produces the diamond, and succeeds in making a bargain.

Next morning in the shop window, amid a display of cheap bracelets—"specially reduced to 29 francs"—and plated ware that is mostly tin, appears the great diamond, to be seen by every one who passes. A placard, written in inks of two colors, says:

MARVELOUS REPRODUCTION OF THE FAMOUS "REGENT" DIAMOND
Which Was Stolen From the Louvre

People who stop to look at it remark that it is a work that "must have taken much patience," and that the artist was "not without skill." They admire it as an interesting curiosity. A few experts and connoisseurs, however, shrug their shoulders and pass on, saying:

Digitized by Google

"He must think us simple, trying to humbug us with his 'marvelous reproduction!' As if one would for a moment consider seriously such a piece of glass!"

But a different sort of expert happens to pass that way. It is Levy-Bronstein, the prince of the jewelers of Paris. He stops and looks at the imitation. It pleases him. He enters the shop and demands in the brusk, businesslike voice which he uses even in dealing with royalty—

"How much do you want for your imitation?"

"But, monsieur, I wasn't exactly thinking of selling it. The fact is——"

"Come, what's the price?"

"You see, monsieur, people stop to look at the workmanship, which is very careful—oh, not perfect, of course!" he adds, for the creature feels a kind of fear. "But you understand, it is of much advantage for me to have in my window something which attracts attention."

"Don't try to teach me the jewelry business. I'll take your chunk of glass if you will name a sensible price."

"Three hundred francs."

"Two hundred."

"No."

"Wrap it up. Here's your money."

And Levy-Bronstein walks out with the little package.

In this way Sénèque receives all at once a hundred and fifty francs. His accomplice, a creature of narrow business ability, merely expresses a few regrets that the treasure is gone and that Fortune is always so quick to escape. At the same time he is glad that the risk has gone also. If trouble should come, he could plead he had acted in good faith. Even if the worst should happen, his cause would become the same with that of Levy-Bronstein—which would be quite a different matter from being alone.

But Sénèque, having drunk the philtre of ambition, is meditating new plans. As he sets out toward one of the gay restaurants, where he will eat a fine dinner and see pretty faces, his mind is intoxicated with schemes and desires.

EXACT COPY OF THE CELEBRATED "REGENT" DIAMOND WHICH WAS STOLEN FROM THE LOUVRE

FOR a week the people of Paris have been crowding in front of the principal window of Levy-Bronstein, where, more discreetly and flanked by rows of incomparable gems, sparkles a crystal marked:

This morning a man, only fairly presentably dressed but wearing new boots and a new hat, enters the store and asks for Monsieur Levy. He meets with difficulties. A secretary offers to take the message. But Joseph Sénèque insists. Not only does he wish to speak to the proprietor, but he demands to speak with him alone.

After certain precautions, word is given, and the insurgent is ushered into the private office of Monsieur Levy-Bronstein, who glares at him through his glasses, trying to recall the face.

"Monsieur," says Sénèque, "the imitation is the real one. I know, because it was my work. I mean, taking it from the Louvre was my work. And the only place where I could get rid of it was the place where you got it—under conditions that we both know."

Levy-Bronstein gives a quick glance toward the door. But Sénèque, guessing his intention, holds up a warning finger.

"Don't be too hasty, monsieur. This is not a story for you to tell to the first person you see. No, it would not be wise to confide it even to your best friend. Not even to Madame Levy—supposing that she is still living. And certainly not to that pretty doll who was waiting for you the other day in the auto, and who appeared to be very impatient. No; you will take great care that this does not get known."

"But——"

"Of course you haven't stolen anything. Oh, no! You merely bought a lump of glass at a fancy price. It was by means of your bank-notes that I presented myself with this coat and this hat and these shoes, which were necessary to me before I could gain admission here. You see, nothing in Nature is lost.

"But as I was saying, you will take care to keep the secret. For, in the first place, if you have bought the real Regent for three hundred francs and continue to possess it, calling it falsely a piece of glass, then you are an accomplice in the case. An honest citizen would have taken it to the police. You have kept it for more than a week; while all Paris has talked of the robbery."

M. Levy-Bronstein wipes the perspiration from his forehead.

Digitized by Google

"And if you really thought it was false, then your judgment as an expert is nothing. Not to recognize the Regent! The great Levy-Bronstein to imagine a diamond worth fifteen million francs is a bottle-stopper! You would be laughed at by the world, and no one would trust your opinion again. You could not sell one single stone, although you swore on your honor it was real. You would be ruined."

The jeweler mops his forehead again and breathes hard.

"Well, what do you want?"

"A position of some sort. A small one will do—provided it is not too confining. Oh, I'll be reasonable—only, you know, a fellow has needs——"

"Listen, young man, I'll think this over. Your case is very interesting. In the meantime, take this." He hands him a banknote. "Come back and see me later. Good-by."

"*Au revoir, monsieur.* You are very good. Certainly I shall come back. You may count on me."

THE life of M. Levy-Bronstein has been transformed into a bad dream. The insurgent, on the other hand, finds existence very agreeable. He gives himself up to pleasures. As time goes by, he worries less and less, while M. Levy-Bronstein worries more and more. The unhappy jeweler now wishes he had avowed everything in the beginning. The truth may come out at any minute. Losing his head with fear, he is on the point of confessing the whole situation to the authorities, when an inspiration comes to him. He has a plan for getting rid of Joseph Sénèque and the little jeweler.

Of this pale, cringing, unpleasant accomplice Sénèque also has had enough. To *share*, when it means taking a part of what some one else has gained, is very agreeable; but when it means being obliged to give some one else part of what you have gained—then it is quite a different matter. When Joseph Sénèque received the three fifty-franc notes from the little jeweler, he smiled with satisfaction; but now to be obliged to hand over a large royalty on the monthly allowance from Levy-Bronstein—to hand this over to a creature who does nothing—well, it is maddening.

Sénèque, now feeling again the spirit of revolt, resolves to free himself from this entangling connection. He will steal the Regent again, and begin over. He can do better this time, for he has had experience and he has plenty of money in his pocket so that he can wait for a favorable opportunity to dispose of the gem; and Levy-Bronstein will not dare to notify the police—for why should a jeweler be excited over the theft of an imitation?

In the meantime, however, Levy-Bronstein carries out his plans. All day long the Regent lies on its velvet mounting in the shop window, but each night it is secretly taken by the proprietor to a back room where a clever workman copies it in glass. In a week it is finished. It is a wonderfully deceiving imitation. Levy-Bronstein smiles. He now puts the imitation on the velvet mounting in the window, where people admire it as much as they admired the other, and hides the real Regent in his private office. Then he sends for the little jeweler.

He comes, more pale than ever from excitement. Why has Levy-Bronstein sent for him?

"Ah, good day!" cries the gem merchant coming out of his office to greet him. "I wanted to tell you something which I thought might interest you. A few weeks ago I bought at your shop a curious piece of glass. You remember?"

"Yes, monsieur."

"Well—Sénèque, fetch me that imitation that is in the window. Thank you—well as I was saying, I bought this rather odd piece of glass from you several weeks ago but I never examined it very thoroughly until yesterday. Then I found, by means of a delicate instrument which I have here, that this is made of a very wonderful kind of glass—brittle, perhaps, but superior to any artificial crystal I have ever seen. If I could find out the formula and the process of making it, I would undertake the manufacture myself. Where did you get this?"

"I—I—monsieur, I—" hesitates the little jeweler, trembling; for the employees of the shop are staring at him. All he can do is point a shaking finger at Sénèque.

Levy-Bronstein pretends to be so occupied with the piece of glass as not to notice the other's confusion.

"Just look at that brilliancy!" he exclaims. "Hold it up to the light yourself."

Saying this, he makes a quick motion of

Digitized by Google

handing him the supposed Regent, but contrives to miss the nervous fingers. The shining object falls upon the marble floor, and smashes into a thousand pieces.

"*Mon Dieu!*" cries Sénèque. "What have you done, monsieur!"

As for the little jeweler, he faints like a dead man. Levy-Bronstein catches him from falling. He carries the light body to a chair.

Sénèque stands for a moment as if dazed, and then says—

"I will find something to revive him. I believe I need some myself."

Levy-Bronstein, assisted by his other employees, looks after the unconscious man. His manner is very solicitous, but what he is thinking is—

"Now I am rid of these two pests forever, and I still have my diamond."

By the time Sénèque appears again, bringing a flask of cognac, the little jeweler has returned to consciousness, and Levy-Bronstein is saying:

"Come, come, my boy! There's no need of acting this way over breaking a piece of glass. It was my own fault; I don't blame you. Feel better now? There's a good fellow. Let me send you home in a taxi."

"No, I'll walk."

He gets up and staggers out through the door.

As he goes, Levy-Bronstein calls to him—

"If you ever find out the secret of that glass, I'll pay you handsomely for it."

Then he turns and walks back to his private office, smiling.

"And now for you, friend Regent!" he murmurs with satisfaction, "I'll keep you hidden for a year or two, then smuggle you to America, and sell you *sub rosa* to some millionaire. Meanwhile you don't exist. You—good God!"

The secret hiding-place is empty.

Frantically, vainly, Levy-Bronstein searches through everything. He jerks out drawers so excitedly that they drop to the floor. He pulls the whole room to pieces.

Then, struck by a sudden thought, he flings open the door and calls:

"Sénèque! Sénèque! Where is Sénèque?"

A young clerk answers politely:

"Monsieur, he has stepped out for a moment. He said he would be back immediately."

A MONTH passes. Sénèque, lately accustomed to extravagance, is running short of money, but he has not been able to devise a way of disposing of the diamond. He will soon be as badly off as he was the first time.

At last, unable to think of anything else to do, he goes to the shop of the little jeweler.

He is received very coldly.

"Say, old boy," begins Sénèque, "I've come to talk with you about the diamond."

"What diamond?"

"The Regent, of course. I have it in my room."

"Are you out of your wits? You saw that scoundrel smash it before us; so what are you talking about? Do you think I'm a fool?"

"Yes, if you're duped by a simple trick like that. Why, that wasn't the Regent. That was only an imitation. The real one is still intact. I have it."

"Hah! Likely enough!" growls the jeweler. "You deceived me once with a 'real Regent,' but you won't do it again! Get out of here!"

Baffled, discouraged, Sénèque goes home to his lodging, takes out the diamond and examines it. He is no longer sure that it is genuine. Besides, he is hungry, which prevents his thinking calmly. His doubts increase with his want of food. He wishes he could show the stone to some expert and be reassured. But to whom would he dare show it? And if the expert said it was false? Sénèque's mind is dizzy.

He goes out again, aimlessly, carrying the thing in his pocket. The bridges of the Seine begin once more to tempt him. He is afraid of himself.

In desperation he enters a middle-class jewelry shop and says to the proprietor—

"Monsieur, here is a very exact reproduction of the famous Regent, which——"

"Monsieur," interrupts the shopkeeper, "the trade is overrun with these imitations. They were in demand for a time while they were still a novelty, but now people have lost interest in them. Levy-Bronstein, who knows the public taste better than anybody, took his out of the window at least a month ago—and his copy was far superior to this and the ones one generally sees. Since then they have been selling at less than the cost of manufacture. So I'm very sorry but——"

Sénèque does not wait for him to finish

Digitized by Google

but stumbles, in a daze, out of the door. Mechanically—for he neither thinks nor cares what he is doing—he begins to walk in the direction of the police headquarters. As he goes along, his mind grows easier. He is glad of what he is about to do.

Ah, a pleasant surprise—the secretary who receives him is an acquaintance of his school-days. This happy omen cheers him, Dropping all hesitation and feeling a great relief, he says—

"Here is the Regent."

He places the fifteen-million-franc diamond upon the table.

The secretary smiles.

"You are about the twentieth person who has come to us with a piece of glass like that."

"But I tell you this is the Regent."

"Oh, no, old chap. I'm sorry to disappoint you, but it is not. Without knowing who palmed this off on you, I can assure you it is a fraud. The real Regent, which people still suppose is lost, was destroyed some time ago, under circumstances that I can't repeat to you as they involve a well-known person.

"But the fact is—and I tell you this in strict confidence, for it is a secret of the department—one of the big gem merchants got hold of the diamond in a very questionable manner, and then, fearing we would find it in his possession, he smashed it. The matter has been kept secret to prevent a scandal. So you mustn't repeat this to any one."

"But this diamond?" stammers Sénèque.

"Absolutely worthless. You've been swindled."

"Thank you—good-by."

Joseph Sénèque goes out into the street, tortured with hunger. At the first corner is a pedler carrying a tray full of bright pieces of glass.

"Get a Regent diamond," says the pedler. "Only fifty centimes." Then he adds waggishly—"Every one guaranteed genuine."

Sénèque passes on. At the end of the street is a bridge. He enters upon it, staggering like a drunken man. When he reaches the middle, he stops, checks a last yawn, looks over the parapet, closes his eyes with a grimace, and jumps.

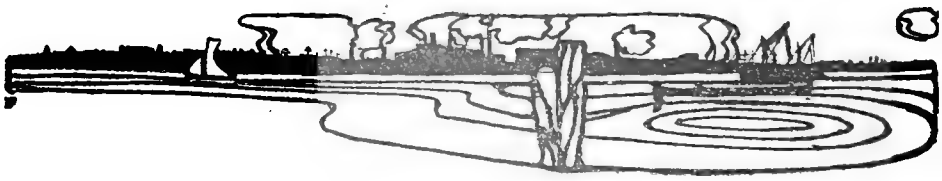
Next day his body is dragged out of the river. The Regent, found in his pocket is eventually restored to its place in the Louvre, where it may still be seen.

The uninitiated believe it to be genuine. Experts say it is false.

THERE was silence for a moment, before Mrs. Dawson looked up mischievously, and said:

"A remarkable story, Monsieur Régnaud. Thank you for telling it to me—but what about my bracelet?"

"That, madame," he replied, bowing in departure, "is a very remarkable imitation of a bracelet which is still missing from the palace in Madrid. I thank you for a pleasant evening."



Digitized by Google

THAT FOOL PETE

by

E. E. Harriman

Author of "Riding Steel" and "Strict Justice and Cheap."

THE shadow of South Fork Mountain was crawling across the valley, and its forty miles of eastern slope was turning misty blue. Down at its base, the little cañons and draws lay in black and purple brush strokes that blended out into the upper blue. The sun was just blinking his last at Hyampom, where seven men sat in front of the tiny store and post-office, waiting for the belated mail.

"That fool, Pete, is dang late t'day," said "Whispering" Hillman in a voice that made the canned goods rattle on the shelves inside. "He gits wuss an' wuss. What in —— the Guv'ment ever give the mail-kerryin' job to him fer is more'n I kin see."

"I kin tell ye if ye want to know," called Fowler, owner of the store, from within. "Jest because you 'n' the other fellers bid too high."

"Mebbe we did an' ag'in, mebbe we didn't," answered Hillman. "When a man takes a job like that he figgers on the resk he hes t' take, 's well 's the time. When a fool like Pete takes the contrac' he don't never think o' nothin' but the honor o' bein' a Guv'ment employee an' good day wages. Now he's allays harpin' on bein' true t' his oath an' don't think o' nothin' else."

"Well, Whisperin'," said "Fiddling Ted" Cheney, Pete's chum. "You don't need to worry none over Pete. I'll bet my stallion, Midnight, ag' in' a bone collar-button, that there ain't a man in Trinity County thinks as much of keepin' his word as Pete does. He'll be along soon."

"That's right, Hillman," said "Bigfish" Yates. "Pete sticks by his word, no matter what it costs him. He'll never lay down to a holdup, you can bet on that, for he feels that he has given his word to get the mail through. I'm only afraid he won't know enough to give in when some one gets the drop on him."

"Mebbe he had bad luck today," put in Jim Peebles. "Mule bucked a pack loose er fell off the trail. That last rain tore things up a lot. Something's busted or he'd be here by now."

"Aw,——!" roared Hillman. "He's more likely to be stoppin' up at Jed Lane's cabin, t' talk t' Mary."

"Nah!" said Fowler disgustedly, as he came to the door. "Mary went to Weaverville yesterday. Rid Jed's brown mare. Saw her brother Steve this morning an' he tol' me."

"Well, if he ain't stoppin' there, he's off skyhootin' some'ers else," bellowed Whispering Hillman. "You fellers may stan' up fer 'im all ye dang please. I ain't got no use fer 'im an' I don't care who in—— knows it. He ain't got no busted pack fer an excuse, nuther. If he is a dang fool he kin throw as pretty a hitch as ary man here."

Digitized by Google

"No, Hillman. You don't care who knows it," said Ted Cheney. "And as far as 'who in hell' is concerned, you're talkin' loud enough fer hell an' half o' California to hear you. All because Pete beat you in gettin' the contract, after lettin' you beat yourself in a mule trade. That's what ails you, Whisperin'."

"Ye danged, loose-tongued, wopple-jawed, fiddlin' tramp!" bellowed the old man. "Fer two cents I'd——"

He did not finish his threat, for the telephone rang sharply and every man turned to listen. Fowler darted across to the instrument and lifted the receiver. His words came distinctly to the group.

"H'lo! Oh! That you, Bill? Yep, this is Fowler. What? Say that ag'in! Well, I'll be ——! Ain't that ——, now. Wait a shake, Bill. Hey, you fellers! It's Bill, Pete's brother, on the wire. Says Pete's blue roan has jest come in the c'ral with the saddle covered with blood an' a wound in the shoulder! Gwan, Bill! Give us the rest of it."

"Ye bet! Every danged man, by criminy! Wait a minute. Le's see! There's Whisperin', an' Fiddlin' Ted, an' Jim Peebles, an' me, an' Hank, an' Sam Groat, an' Bigfish Yates, an' Tom Gary. That's all. Eight of us, an' every ——man a friend o' Pete. Hey? Sure! They'll come a-runnin'."

He hung up the phone and looked at the men. The mighty frame of old Hillman filled the door as he pushed his way inside. After him came Ted Cheney. The old man's eyes were blazing.

"Any mules come back yit?" he demanded.

"Nary a mule. Bill says the mail sacks an' the express box was on the little black mule, Johnny. All the rest carried freight."

"Fellers," roared Hillman. "Git yer guns an' best trail hosses an' git 'em quick. Take a blanket apiece, fer Gawd knows how long we'll be out. Now hustle like ——, you —— —— —— kiotes. We're a-goin' t' do somepin' an' do it —— quick."

"Thought you hadn't no use fer Pete, Whisperin'," said Peebles.

"You —— —— goat!" said the old man, his face turning crimson to his hair. "D'ye think I'd hang back fer a thing like that? Ye—— —— —— —— of a sweeneyed mule with the poll evil! I want ye t' understand that I'll quarrel with Pete er any other man when I feel like it, but you ner no other—— man kin beat me to it when it comes t standin' up fer a neighbor when a lot o'—— holdups have lit into 'im."

The old man was so filled with indignation that any man could have thought sc meanly of him, that he went out of the stor with a stream of picturesque oaths coming back over his shoulder in a deep rumble. The other men looked at Peebles and he grinned sheepishly.

"You hurt his feelings, Jim," said Fowler "The old man ain't half as bad as he sounds Better make it right."

"Aw,——, Whisperin'," said Jim. "I was only kiddin' you. Fergit it."

"All right, Jim," was the answer. "I it was on'y some o' your —— fool jokes, I'l let it pass, but it sure did make me mad fe a wink. Come on, fellers! 'Lect a captain fust thing."

"I nominate Whisperin' Hillman," said Peebles. "All in favor stick up your mit. 'Lected, by jing! Now what?"

"Why, git them guns an' hosses, ye slow-pokes," said the old man. "I don't aim t' give orders more'n once. Git, now, an' git fast."

"I got a mile farther to go than any man here," said Ted Cheney. "I'll throw the saddle on Midnight and I reckon we can catch you."

"Hey, Sally! You Sally!" called Fowler, as the men started away. "I want you tc 'tend store while pappy goes away fe awhile."

A girl of fifteen came running from the rooms behind the store and Fowler hurried out to saddle his rangy sorrel. When the rest came back they found him ready and waiting. When all were present but Cheney, Hillman gave the word and they rode away. The rumble and thunder of the hoof-beats on the swinging bridge across Hayfork Creek came up to the girl in the store door, and then they were gone.

A few minutes later she saw a coal-black horse go past the store at a reckless gait, with Fiddling Ted Cheney on his back. The sudden crash of the stallion's feet on the bridge, his clattering dash across the resonant planks, and the dull beating and occasional clink from the iron-shod hoofs on the road beyond, told her that Ted was making a new record for wild riding.

Digitized by Google

LEANING over the neck of the "devil horse" as some had called him, Ted ran his hand along the arch where the long mane sprung free, to stream back in the rider's face and breast. He patted the proud neck and talked lovingly into that slim left ear that was cocked back to hear his voice. And the strong loins beneath him heaved with the tremendous impulse of the powerful legs that drove them onward.

Darkness was creeping over the valley and the slopes. The trail was growing dim. Steadily it rose and none but the most powerful of horses could have maintained the pace now being made by Midnight. He had struck a trail by now where no horse could more than walk, but he had been trained to walk fast and he went swinging up the winding, irregular way, at a fast gait. The creak of saddle leather, the clink of iron on stone, the occasional grunt as Midnight lifted himself up an extra steep pitch, were all the sounds to be heard.

By the time the darkness had become dense enough to make travel a matter to be left entirely to the horse, Ted saw the moon sending its first beams across the upper peaks. Soon it took up the job just a little while ago abandoned by the sun, and lighted his way. He felt a throb of thankfulness for the pale light. It might, and probably would, make the search for Pete much easier. A little farther along and he saw something white on the side of a tree close to the trail.

Pulling Midnight to a halt, Ted reached for his pocket and drew out an electric torch, bought on his last trip to Weaverville. He had brought the trinket home, more for the fun of the thing than from any expectation of using it for a practical purpose, but it had flashed through his mind that it might aid tonight and he had put it in his pocket. Now he turned its rays on the white object and Midnight snorted as he shied away. Bringing his horse back to the tree, Ted forced him to stand while he read the message, scrawled on an envelope and pinned to the tree with a hardwood pin.

Here is where they went. Mules just ahead, packs cut open, express box and mail gone, packs strewed all over ground, mules tied up. The trail shows blood and Johnny is gone. Think Pete is on Johnny.

That was all. Ted read it over twice, then dismounted and turned his flash-light on the trail. Here was the branch trail that turned off towards Butter Creek. It was trodden and hacked by horse and mule hoofs of several days ago, but he made out fresh tracks over the old. Studying carefully, Ted found that the posse had cut across the corner, swinging into the Butter Creek trail about forty feet from its junction with the main trail making it clear that they had not left those new tracks at the turn. At this point he saw a splash of dull red on a flat stone in the trail and felt a pain contract his heart.

"I'll bet that's Pete's blood," he thought. "I wonder if the gang have kidnapped Pete or if he is following them. The boys have cut the trail up so bad I can't tell."

He started off up the Butter Creek trail, walking and leading his horse. Every hundred yards he would flash the light on the trail to make sure the posse had not left it. For over an hour he made his way on foot and then he mounted once more. Another hour went by and he thought he heard a sound ahead. He stopped Midnight and then the sound came back to him plainly. It was the click and clink of horses traveling a flinty road.

Ten minutes later he rode in among the others, where they had paused to rest their horses. They were weary but determined. Ted sprang off his horse and walked ahead of the group, Hillman with him, and held his light low to study the trail.

"We kinda thought mebbe they was takin' Pete with 'em fer some devilish reason," whispered Hillman. "What do you think?"

"No. He is following them," said Ted. "See how Johnny has stepped on the other tracks. Then the blood drops are in the tracks that have been made by the horses. Pete is trailing the bandits on the back of little Johnny. He can't hold out much longer, losing blood at this rate. We must leave our horses before long or they will hear us coming. How far ahead do you figure they are?"

"'Bout a hour, I reckon. We can ride a couple mile more an' then hide the broncs in a draw. C'm on. Let's hike."

About two miles farther on the men dismounted and led their tired animals into a draw that was filled with a thick growth of small trees. Here they secured them and hung the saddles on limbs. Then they

Digitized by Google

walked back to the trail and took up the pursuit. There was no thought of resting. It was clear that Pete was badly hurt and they must get to him quickly.

When Ted used his flash-light he held it low and tried to screen its light from any prying eyes that might lurk at any side. He kept to his former plan of examining the trail at every hundred yards. It was well that he did so, for they overran the place where the bandits left the trail by over eighty yards. When Ted and Hillman found no hoof-marks in the trail they had the others stand still while they made a cast back, watching the sides of the trail carefully, and found the place where they had branched off.

"Makin' fer the trail t' Tule Creek," whispered Hillman. "Went by the forks an' come half round the loop t' Butter Creek ag'in, thinkin' they might throw any one follerin' off the track. Now they travel southwest a bit an' hit the trail ag'in. I know a trick wuth two o' that. We'll jest hit a bee-line southeast an' cut the trail ahead or danged close up behind 'em."

"S'pose they don't hit the trail clear round. What then?" said Ted.

"We'll camp right thar an' start on ag'in at daylight," answered Hillman. "They may be hid in the brush right now, pipin' us off an' if we go on they'll go back. If we go back they'll go on. Got t' have more light. Best thing we kin do."

"Look here, Hillman. I've got a scheme," said Cheney. "I'll follow their trail while the rest of you try to cut in ahead. Then they won't have a chance to turn back."

"Alone? You sure are a danged fool, ain't ye? But ye got grit an' that's better than sense sometimes. Go ahead thataway, then. Want one or two fellers with ye?"

"No. I'll go it alone."

HILLMAN started back to the posse and Ted struck off on the trail so freshly made. He traveled partly by the feel of freshly turned leaves under his feet and partly by the use of the torch. The trail led him up a steep slope, along a ridge for half a mile, down another slope and then he heard a movement in the brush near him. Holding his rifle ready for instant use, the flashlight lying against its barrel, he pressed the switch with the thumb of his left hand and saw—Johnny.

The little mule was standing beside a tree of small size, tied fast. On his le shoulder blood had caked all the way fro his roach to the leg. He still wore his sa buck pack-saddle. Cheney groaned as h thought of a sorely wounded man riding a these weary miles on a pack-saddle. The was no other animal in sight.

Fiddling Ted Cheney put his arm ov the little mule's neck and stood still thin ing. He believed that his friend was n far away, but where? It was a bad tim to look for any one, with a bandit gang loo in the forest, and the light so poor. H studied the situation, trying to decide wh Pete had left Johnny.

There was only one answer that seemed all reasonable. He must have had eviden that the bandits were very near and feare to stay on the mule, lest his little blac hoofs or his voice might betray his ride Taking his arm off the mule's neck, Chene sat down on the ground, determined to wa for daylight.

He watched the moon sail slowly acro the sky and sink toward the western horizo He listened to the sounds of the night, th rustle of a mountain rat, the hoot of an ow the rush of a fox after some small victim and it seemed to him that time had neve moved so very slowly since time begai When the first gray streak showed in th east, he rose and stepping softly, starte forward along the fugitive's trail. His rif was held ready for use and every footfa was made soundless. He went across a little glade filled with trees, up anothe slope, down again, and stopped as he cam to a cluster of mountain mahogany. H could look down from the shelf or bench o which he stood, to the bottom of a cañon that led down to a larger cañon.

The thing that had made him pause wa the sight of a horse, half hidden by droop ing branches, but with his hind quarter exposed to view. Standing, rigidly quiet Ted sent his gaze from point to point a about the space near the horse. He coul see sweat-marks on the back, he was no over eighty yards away, and felt positiv that this was one of the horses he had bee following.

The light grew stronger as Ted watche and at last he made out the head of anothe horse, one that stood beside the first, bu facing in the opposite direction, his hea beside the first one's shoulder. A momen

Digitized by Google

later a slight movement drew his eye and he saw a third at a distance of a few feet from the first.

He crouched, after a long, close scrutiny that failed to reveal a trace of the bandits, and crept forward. Thirty yards down the cañon-side lay a jumble of rocks that rose waist-high above the soil. He started a crawl toward these rocks, moving with the stealth of a cat stalking a bird. He heard no sound nor saw a movement during the first half of the distance. Then his head thrust forward past an oak and he paused with his right hand, holding his rifle, in the act of swinging forward for the next advance.

Off at his left, under a wide-limbed oak, his back against the trunk and his head drooping in slumber, sat a man with a rifle across his legs. The fellow was about twenty feet lower than Ted and perhaps sixty feet to the left. Ted held his position until his left arm began to tremble under his weight, and then lowered his right hand, slowly and carefully, to the ground.

For the rest of his journey to the rockpile he would have no shelter and he felt the short hairs on his neck begin to rise. He wondered if the other bandits were awake and where they could drop a bullet in his back before he saw them. There was nothing for him to do but go on, as he was only partly concealed where he was lying. He crept on in absolute silence his skin twitching with dread of that bullet.

He reached the rocks and shifted his body till he lay facing the sleeping sentinel, flat on his belly, peeping through a triangular hole between two large fragments of rock. He could see under the branches now, and made out the other men with little difficulty. Two figures, wrapped in blankets, lay a little higher up the slope and back from the sentinel, well hidden except from below.

AS TED snuggled into place and slid his rifle through the triangle in front of his face, he heard the snap of a twig and the sentinel came awake with a jerk. His nervous clutch on his gun, his quick, darting look from place to place, told the strain he was under. There was no further sound and he dropped his rifle across his knees and yawned.

A part of a huge tree above the sleepers and still farther back to the right, appeared to detach itself from the main trunk and start down the draw. With a gasp, Ted recognized the face of Pete, showing pale and drawn through grime and blood. His flannel shirt was stiff with dried blood from the left shoulder down, and the same reddish-brown stains showed on his corduroy trousers. He moved like a somnambulist, rather than like a man in possession of his senses.

Ted gritted his teeth and drew a bead on the drowsy sentinel. If the fellow under the tree lifted a weapon against Pete, good old Pete, he would get him, cold. The advancing, bloody figure trod on a stick and the watcher whirled with gun half raised. Ted followed the turn and his right hand started the trigger squeeze.

With a yell the bandit dropped his rifle, whirled and leaped for the farther side of the draw. The sleepers came out of their blankets with catlike readiness, reaching for belt guns as they rose. One look, and the older man staggered back in terror, but his mate drew. As the revolver slipped from the holster, Ted shifted his rifle a trifle and finished the delayed trigger squeeze. The outlaw's hand dropped, slack and nerveless, the gun slid from his fingers, his form seemed to shrink and become loose in its clothing, and he pitched forward.

The other man shoved his shaking hands high above his head, and, just as he did so, the sound of a crashing volley came down the wind. The posse had met the fleeing member of the trio, Ted told himself, with a smile. He walked across to the shaking wretch who still held his hands high and his eyes on the wreck of the mail-carrier.

With a jerk, Ted flipped the revolver from the fellow's holster, then took off his belt, looped it about his wrists, threw the end over a limb, pulled till he had half the man's weight on the leather and made it fast. Leaving him on tiptoe to relieve the strain on his arms, Ted picked up the revolver and went over to where Pete was on his knees, pulling over the blankets with weak hands.

"Here, old man," said Fiddlin' Ted. "Lay off that stunt. It's time you went bylow, old scout. Let me ease you down on the blankets, jest this way. Now I'll plug that hole that's been leakin' so badly."

"The money, Ted!" whispered the wounded man. "The money and mail!"

Digitized by Google

"If it's here it won't run away. You lay still, dog-gone your fool hide, and let me patch you. The boys will be along in a jiffy and I want to stop this leakin' afore they come. I was skeered I'd find you all leaked dry, but you got a heap in-you yet. Nothin' but a flesh wound, Petey. Here's the boys comin', hell bent."

Ted let out a shrill yell which was answered by the bellow of old Hillman, and the posse came tearing through the brush in a headlong charge. They gathered around the chums and stared with wide eyes at the white face of Pete. When they spoke it was in low tones and brief sentences. Even Whisperin' Hillman lowered his voice to a whisper that was like a gust of wind in a thicket of buckthorn.

"If you've got wind to do it with, Pete, for God's sake tell us why you walked out on those fellers thataway, without ary gun," said Ted. "And why the devil that chap yelled and cut stick the way he did."

"He thought I was a ghost," came the answer in a weak whisper. "I follered 'cause I'm under oath and I couldn't let them git away with all that money and mail. I ain't bruk my word yit."

"Of all the —— fools," husked old Hillman's hurricane whisper. "I never saw his like afore."

Ted turned on him savagely, his eyes hot with rage and his teeth bared.

"You infernal bear," he said, tensely. "Don't you think it time you quit abusing him, when he's nigh dead?"

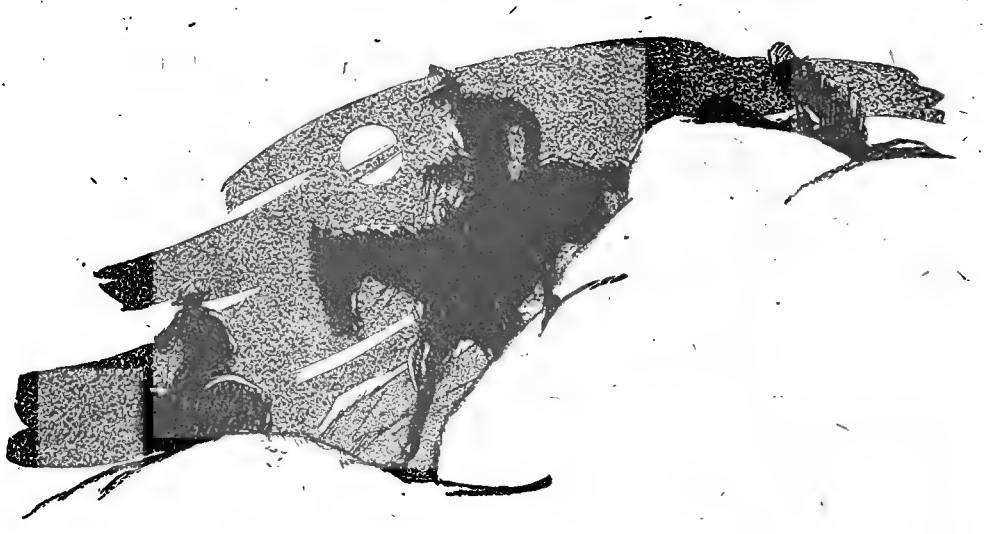
"Who's abusin' anybody, you danged, loose-tongued, wopple-jawed, fiddlin' tramp?" roared Hillman, forgetting his effort to be quiet. "Pete's a plumb fool, but he's a man, an' a better one than ary feller here. I'll carry Pete back to Hyampom in my arms, if need be, but I ain't got no 'pology ready fer your say-so, you lizard-eatin' son of a buzzard! Now quit yer fussin' er I'll wrop ye round a tree an' tie yer laigs to your neck."

Swift fingers cut and trimmed a pair of saplings, lashing them to the sides of the gentlest pair of horses, stretching the outlaw's blankets over both to form a stretcher. Into this went poor old Fool Pete, his weak hands clutching at the recovered treasure, as the boys laid it beside him. He smiled up into the face of Ted.

"Didn't lose a cent of it, did I, Ted?" he whispered.

"Not a penny, and the boys say the feller they met, after you scared him, looked like a sieve when they turned him over. Hillman thinks he caught every bullet of that volley," said his chum. "Now rest and don't try to talk. We'll have you back in Hyampom mighty soon. I'm riding old Midnight after a doctor now, so good-by till you are in bed."

"All the money and every skunk of a bandit," said Pete with a happy sigh. "That ain't so bad after all."



Digitized by Google

AN OFFICER AND A GENTLEMAN

by Gordon McCreagh

Author of "The Brass Idol," "That Blasted Discipline," etc.

SEVEN bells in the morning watch. The *Texan*, U. S. Battle-ship of the Line, was getting ready with swift, machine-like efficiency to begin the day's work. That would not commence, officially, for another hour and a half; but already, while landsmen slept, a host of lesser things had been accomplished which were regarded only as incidental preliminaries.

Hammocks had been lashed with the precise seven marlin hitches and a round turn of regulations and stowed in the nettings with equal intricacy; sweepers had been over the decks; hose men had wet them down; clothes had been scrubbed; clothes-lines triced up; and now mess call had sounded, giving the men a breathing space. There was yet to come "gun and deck bright work," and "clear decks for quarters." Then "muster for morning inspection." After that the real day's work began.

First-class Seaman Hynes hurried over his breakfast with silent intentness. His mind was on a big, three-cornered rent in his blue jumper. The uniform for the day had been posted on the dress boards as "blue dress," and Hynes was much too smart a seaman to care to be put on the report for "non-regulation clothing," which is the official way of frowning upon torn sleeves.

He hoped to snatch a little time to mend it between breakfast and "turn to for bright work" while the men got into their uniforms. But it so happened that the senior petty officer of his division called him to explain some orders about the intermediary gun bases which needed attention, and the short respite was lost.

Hynes swore to himself with exasperation. However, he still had a chance, he told himself. He would steal a little time during the sweep down before the assembly call for inspection. But Fate seemed to be vindictively against him that day; he must have rolled out of the wrong side of his hammock; or perhaps because he had committed the indiscretion of whistling during the night watch; or the wrong stars were on the ascendent, or something. He had just snatched his sewing kit, when—

"Hynes! Pass the word for Hynes!" sounded along the berth deck. "Loot'n't Lee to see Hynes!"

"Gol dash it!" snapped Hynes, and he thrust his sewing kit into his ditty box and hurried aft.

Junior Lieutenant Lee was the officer for the sixth division, to which Hynes belonged.

Digitized by Google

He was, incidentally, the officer in charge of the ship's athletics, and since Hynes was a husky middleweight and all-round champion of the ship, the lieutenant wanted to talk to him about the coming glove tournament.

The officer talked at provoking length and asked a long list of questions. Hynes fidgeted through many minutes, and finally made bold to turn the issue.

"Beg y' pardon, sir, I got to do a small job o' sewing before assembly. Officers' call's gone already."

The officer looked at him in a preoccupied way.

"Er, all right, Hynes, just a minute," he said absently, and turned again to his list.

Priceless minutes sped while Hynes shuffled uneasily from one foot to the other, and then—"Monkey in the Grass," the assembly call, rang clear throughout the ship.

Hynes raced off and fell in with his division on the double, feeling much like a schoolboy who knows that he is going to be caught with stolen apples in his pocket, and hoping against hope that he may get away with it. He sidled up to the man next to him, hugging inches closer than the regulation light touch of the elbows. But Fate was surely out for his scalp that bright morning.

Down the deck strode no less a personage than the commanding officer himself, followed by the officer of the division. Captain Peterson was something of a martinet in his way, a just man and a fine officer, but keen as a hawk on the little details of smartness and discipline which go to make for efficiency. It was a disquieting habit of his every now and then to make a personal inspection of a division or two without warning.

"Open ranks!" came the sharp order. "About, face. Right hand, salute!"

Hynes groaned inwardly and felt sick; he prided himself on his clean, sailor-like smartness. He attempted to hide his shame under a half-hearted, lubberly salute with a low-hanging elbow. His very clumsiness betrayed him. Commander Peterson's quick eye caught the gleam of white flesh through the sleeve.

"What's this, what's this? You, what's your name?—Ah, yes, Hynes. Hm! I'm ashamed of you, Hynes; a man of your record. Your service too. I never expected to see your name on the report."

Hynes flushed with dull shame and looked at his division officer. He was not the man to make excuses when the proper authority was there to explain the circumstances. But Lieutenant Lee's face had the same faraway, absent look with an expression of worriment. It was clear that he neither saw nor heard; he was going through the routine mechanically while his mind was intent on some greater trouble. He said never a word, and the commanding officer passed on down the line fretting and clucking to himself with exasperation, as he always did when a good man fell from grace.

The dull flush on Hynes' rough carved face deepened to a redder one of angry indignation. Not only had he been made a monkey of before a lot of slobs whom he despised privately and who grinned covertly at him behind the chief's back, but he felt that he had been betrayed by his division officer, who should have spoken up and admitted that the fault was his.

During the daily routine of the setting-up exercises which followed the inspection, Hynes' fellows in the immediate vicinity took occasion to rub it in with all the diabolical ingenuity of healthy, overgrown, and entirely imp-ridden boys. Careless young devils, some of them, who had not yet been drilled into keeping pace with their commander's precise ideas, they took a gorgeous delight in ragging the immaculate who was a standing reproach to them.

" 'At's the time he got'cha, Heinie," came a guarded whisper from behind. And, "Messy lubber, that fust-class seaman, ain't he?" grunted somebody else. And one, a genius, "Them sloppy rookies had oughta be broke in in th' slush gang."

Hynes reddened all the way round to the back of his neck and swore and fumed inwardly. If he could have got at his tormentors he would have punched somebody's head with effective precision, and the knowledge that his anger would have passed by the time he would be free to do so made him madder still.

LATER, during the dinner-hour, "Floppy" Diss found him. Floppy was one of those ferret-eyed, mean-souled individuals who can be found on every ship, always ready to express his own chronic disaffection through some bolder spirit than himself if he could find one whom he might stir up sufficiently to make a cat's-paw of.

Digitized by Google

"Yeah, that's the way with them gold-lace orf'cers," he fanned Hynes' smoldering indignation with solicitous sympathy. "Fat lot they cares for th' enlisted man. Sits in their holy ward-room, they does, with their cawfee an' seegars, an' figures how they can get their promotion by makin' a show o' disciplin' on us guys."

A man like that is a pestiferous canker in the heart of any ship's company. Hynes felt sore and aggrieved; but he was not ready to listen to sedition—yet.

"Aw, shut up," he growled with surly menace. He was just a plain man, no deep thinker into the psychology of emotions and their causes; he just felt in the mood to punch somebody's head; almost anybody's would do; the kind of man with medium intelligence who can be shaped into the best sailor in the world—with proper handling. Floppy moved hastily out of reach; but here was fruitful soil, he considered, too good an opportunity to be lost.

"'F he was a gentleman he'd a spoke up, 'at's what I say. But what does he care? 'F I was you, Heinie, with your strent', I'd——"

The cold look in Hynes eyes counseled caution. Floppy hurriedly turned on a safer tack.

"Well, I'll fix him for you, I'll tell you that. He gives me more trouble 'n all the rest o' th' bunch throwed together. I'll fix him, you watch me."

Floppy worked in the tailor's shop, and with the cunning of his kind, he thought he knew what was bringing that expression of worriment to Lieutenant Lee's face. He knew how to hit him hardest, he fancied. Nor was his crafty intuition far from right. Lieutenant Lee was worried, seriously; and the trouble was that age-old one in the history of both Services—finance.

A junior lieutenant's pay, while not exactly meager, as many hysterical orators of the anti-militarist nuisance would have us believe, is, on the other hand, by no means princely. There are expenses which the Government never takes into consideration. Additional mess bills, for instance, and uniforms—and here was where the connection with the tailor's shop came in.

Gold lace and braid, to be coaxed into a reasonable longevity, need much careful attention. And to add to the cup of this particular lieutenant's worry, he had just heard that morning by wireless that the small allowance which had been coming to him hitherto would have to be discontinued, temporarily at least, until the million and one necessities for keeping the rest of the family back home alive should have ceased to be negotiable stocks in Wall Street. There was excuse for Lieutenant Lee's absent-mindedness and for the lines of worry on his face.

Came a morning when those lines criss-crossed into a sudden realization of calamity coupled with a snarl of sharp-drawn profanity, the same swift, murderous emotion which has come to most of us at some time or other when going over the laundry. Lieutenant Lee, in getting into his newly-pressed uniform, put his foot squarely through what should have been stout blue cloth!

"——!" he swore, and snatched his foot back as though bitten by a snake; but the damage, of course, was done.

Examination showed that the goods had been burnt, not charred so as to be visible, but scorched with an iron just sufficiently hot to take all the life out of it. Of course, it was an accident down in the tailor's shop, Lieutenant Lee said; but accidents do not defray the cost of the best broadcloth. As an officer on board ship, not even the redress which a landsman may sometimes obtain on account of a torn shirt was open to him, yet the cause of annoyance was infinitely greater.

Lieutenant Lee donned another uniform and stepped out on deck fuming with impotent resentment against something intangible. There, that same vindictive Fate which was weaving such a complicated web through the delicate fabric of relations between officer and enlisted man overtook him with vicious and appalling swiftness. The deck force was engaged in washing down. It was that mid-ship portion of the gun-deck where the galley stores are taken aboard, and therefore a particularly excoriating mixture of lye and sand was being used.

There was the usual rough-and-ready skylarking on, which is a universal sign of health and high spirits in every navy when the supposedly stern eye of immediate authority is absent. As the officer approached, the men were constrained to a respectful silence; but as he passed aft the sly horse-play broke out again behind his back. Just well-fed, overgrown kids, they were, with all the kid's careless lack of forethought.

Digitized by Google

Somebody inserted a bare great-toe under a man who squatted in an irresistibly tempting position. The man lurched forward and cut the legs from under another who staggered, reeled, and subsided with a crash over a rope-handled wooden-bucket, right in the wake of the officer!

There was a deluging fountain of dirty-gray, corrosive liquid—and the officer was in the middle of it. It was the last drop which filled his cup of worry to overflowing. Coming, as it did, on top of his already overstrained financial troubles, and on the very heels of his annoyance at the irreparable ruin of another uniform, it blasted his overwrought nerves to a sudden white-heat of exasperation which would have snatched the self-control from any man.

For a seething moment Lieutenant Lee forgot training, forgot discipline, forgot everything. From part of a system he reverted to just a plain overwrought human. He turned and struck at the man, a foolish, blow, wild, blind, swinging back-handed with the turn, a blow with no possible hurt to it; but the fact remained that he, an officer, struck, and that the blow fell on an enlisted man!

And that man was First-Class Seaman Hynes!

Hynes, who had sprawled over the bucket, sprang to his feet with the lightning swiftness of a wildcat. The bristle brush dropped from his hand. The red surged into his face till it was livid; his eyes blazed from under his heavy brows, and he crouched with his hands in two white-knuckled fists with the big shoulder muscles tense, balancing evenly on both feet.

For an instant he stood like that, an embodiment of retaliative rage. For just an instant; and then, the iron discipline of years hit him like a shell. His breath choked with almost a hiccough and he straightened up, slowly, as if it hurt, and came to a salute.

The whole thing had come and was over in two seconds, and within that time his sudden madness had passed from Lieutenant Lee—before it, in fact. With the falling of the blow his senses came back to him and he realized the enormity of what he had done. His hand dropped to his side. He flushed up redder even than Hynes. For a moment he stared with big, half-understanding eyes, and then he whirled on his heel and walked swiftly away, biting his lip, with his brain in a chaos.

"Whe-e-w!"

A long whistle broke from the men who had seen the thing.

"That breaks him. That lets him out for keeps. Orf'cer's court-martial an' disgrace. I seen it all, Heinie."

The men were terribly correct in their swift diagnosis. Just as instant arrest and a long prison sentence is the least of punishments for an enlisted man striking an officer, so in justice is it one of the most serious offenses an officer can commit to strike an enlisted man. Discipline takes no cognizance of overwrought emotions.

There are no excuses for the officer, and very surely are there no excuses for the man. Whatever the provocation, they must both remain more than human and content themselves with reporting to the proper authorities. With many years of discipline—more years than Lieutenant Lee had endured—this miracle may be accomplished.

"Jeez!" breathed the men. "D' ja see him swing on 'm? What you goin' to do, Heinie?"

Hynes turned on them with sudden fierceness.

"I'm goin' to knock the blasted head off of any one who opens his face to me about it. An' you guys that seen it, you keep your heads shut b'low decks, all the five o' you; else I'll let you know why. 'S my business an' no one else."

The threat of dire vengeance was well-enough meant; but one might as well have expected a village sewing circle to keep so cogent a secret. Below decks men whispered and looked sideways at Hynes, and he knew very well that they were talking about his misadventure. He swore viciously to himself and went about his business with sullen aloofness.

He was one of those sturdy souls who wanted neither advice nor sympathy about his private troubles; but what was he to do, he could not fight the whole ship? It was too absorbing a page in shipboard life to keep entirely closed; his nearer friends ventured to a guarded discussion. Floppy Diss, of course, contrived to insert the poison of his presence.

"Ain'tcha goin' to report him, Heinie? S'help me Gawd, I'd get them gold bars took off him in a minute, I would."

Digitized by Google

Hynes turned slowly on him with smoldering scorn.

"Yeah, you would, I know it. You're just the kind that'd get a whole heap o' satisfaction out o' that sort o' thing."

FIRST-CLASS SEAMAN HYNES was a strong, self-reliant man, not over-educated out of all primitive impulses. He had always entertained the deepest disgust for the type of citizen who would get into conflict and then rush bleating to a court of law to avenge his honor. Himself, he had always been accustomed to attend to his private quarrels with his own two very capable hands. What satisfaction would it be to him, then, to have a pompous court of officers sit in judgment over one of their own kind when he might not even be present?

Floppy understood something of this, though to his mean soul the full import of the thing could never be apparent.

"Well, for pity's sakes, you ain't gonna let'm get clear away with it, are you? Them flossy 'gentlemen' needs to be shown sometimes. 'F I had your strent', I'd lay for 'm ashore the fust night I had a chanst an' beat 'm up so he'd know it. You can't expec' no justice from a norf'cer."

"Aw, you shut up," growled Hynes.

But there was not the conviction in his tone which had been there on the first occasion when Floppy had tried to incite him against this same officer. That was what bit deepest, that he should have suffered twice at the same hands without chance of retaliation. He was no psychologist to analyze out original impulses; he only knew that he had been wronged. There really seemed to be something in Floppy's contention about the impossibility of justice.

Hynes drew apart from his fellows and took to moping morbidly by himself. The more he turned the matter over in his mind, the more did the idea of premeditated assault and battery ashore appeal to him; that was the only satisfaction he had ever known for personal affront. Of course he would have to desert after that; but the Service had become a thing of gall and wormwood to him anyway. First-Class Seaman Hynes was in a bad way.

But if he, the aggrieved, felt bad about it, Junior Lieutenant Lee was in far worse state. On the instant that his foolish, wavering blow fell his madness passed away from him, and before he had walked the length of the deck the full import of the thing came home to him with glaring, pitiless clearness. Each resulting detail separated itself from the rest and stood up alone to torture him. The inevitable court-martial. The equally inevitable sentence. The disgrace. The folks at home, whose hero he had been. His mother. . . .

Lieutenant Lee covered his eyes with his hand. That picture was more than he could bear to look at. He went down and hid himself in his stateroom and sent word to the executive officer that he was sick. And he was; sick with the knowledge of the ghastly fizzle that he had made of his whole career, all in one fleeting, uncontrolled little second. His stateroom gave an impression of privacy, the only place where a hundred eyes did not glare at him with cold hostile scorn.

He shrank into it; he would get formal notice very shortly in any case, conveyed by a brother officer with the compliments of the captain, to consider himself in confinement there until such time as his case could be dealt with.

He waited for it with a hopeless attempt at resignation. The endless minutes passed and the notice did not come. The age-long hours passed, and still no senior officer appeared with formal politeness. The only person who came was the ship's surgeon. Lieutenant Lee was forced to explain that he felt very much better and would be able to take up his duties very shortly. And then, as the days dragged on, from leaden horror to nerve-racking doubt, and finally to the certainty that there was going to be no deadly polite summons from the captain, Lieutenant Lee's case was very much worse than that of First-Class Seaman Hynes.

He realized that the man whom he had wronged, and who was denied all other means of redress, was forbearing to make a report of the matter. His perception, of course, was infinitely clearer than that of Floppy Diss. Himself a man of clean upbringing, and with the healthy independence of a fine athlete and a man of action, he understood pretty accurately just how Hynes felt; he would have felt exactly the same way himself. He owed the man the satisfaction of one man to another—and right here he was up against a stone-wall, the impassable barrier between officer and enlisted man.

Digitized by Google

He could offer no satisfaction! He might apologize, yes; but an apology, by its very nature, may be accepted only in lieu of something else. Of what use would an apology be to a man who knew that he was bound to make a pretense of accepting it, who knew that there could be nothing else? Lieutenant Lee was under an obligation of honor which he could not pay. The worry of it bit a new series of lines into his face and completely drowned out the lesser worry of his financial troubles. Very much worse than Hynes' was his case.

But what were the private worries of two of its members to a great machine-running organization? The business of the ship had to go on as usual. Men ate, and drilled, and slept, and a dozen other minor troubles cropped up and passed again. The daily routine continued with unbroken rhythm.

The annual cycle of the boxing tournament swung along in due course, and those actively interested absorbed themselves in the details of preparation. A chief petty officer took down a list of contestants at the various weights. He came, of course, to Hynes; but Hynes stood sullenly aloof. He was the acknowledged champion of the ship and he didn't want to cut down entries by competing, he said.

"Ther's only one man aboard this ship I'd like to get a slam at," he growled. "An' ther' ain't a chanst o' meetin' him, so what's the use?"

"Yes, I know," said the C. P. O. with understanding. "But you'd ought to forget all about that, Hynes. You know darn well that officers can't compete against enlisted men; 's against the regulations, so what's the good o' harpin' on it? You want to come in on this for the sake of addin' interest for the whole ship."

"Aw, to —— with the ship!" snapped Hynes. "Ther'll be more interest if I stand by, so f'get it."

The list, with a note of Hynes' rather surprising decision, carefully expurgated, came in due course to Lieutenant Lee in his capacity of officer in charge of athletics. The lieutenant could go forward with the arrangements on his own responsibility, or, if he saw any reason for it, he might discuss the matter with the commanding officer.

Later, when the O. K.'d list of contestants was posted and the program was ready to go to the ship's printer, the C. P. O. came to Hynes again.

"Now this isn't an official order, of course, Hynes," he told him in preliminary explanation. "But I'm to tip you off that it'll be appreciated if you'll box a three-round exhibition during this tournament. The men want to see you in action, an' so does everybody else. Now come along, Heinie; you can't afford to get in bad with the quarterdeck by being disagreeable."

Hynes was surprised into asking:

"Who'll I have to meet?"

"Dunno yet," said the C. P. O. "But we'll find somebody. Come on now, it'll be the best card on the ship's program."

"To blazes with the ship's program," was what Hynes intended to growl; but what he did say was:

"Well, I ain't got time to do any special training for it."

It was grudging and ungracious, but it was enough. The C. P. O. hurried off, jubilant in his success. Days passed again, and Hynes was constrained to ask once more:

"Say, who 'm I goin' to meet in this parlor bout?"

"You can search me," said the busy C. P. O. "Some o' the lads in the black gang in the stoke-hold shape like a surprise. The program's goin' to be printed: 'Scientific Exhibition by J. Hynes and A. N. Other.' Wish you'd trained some."

"Aw shucks!" said Hynes.

THE day of the competition arrived, and still the ship was wondering who was the artist selected to spar with the scientific Hynes. The afternoon was declared a holiday and the sacred precinct of the quarterdeck was given up temporarily as being the most suitable place for the ring. After the dinner-hour, instead of the "turn to" call, the word was passed:

"Lay aft the ship's comp'ny, 'cept the duty men; orderly now."

There followed a scramble—a very disorderly one, while the officer of the deck looked discreetly over the side—for places on the after double-decked twelve-inch gun turrets. The great guns had been slewed round athwartships, and soon they accommodated long lines of pushing scuffling men who contrived to sit somehow on the smooth barrels with dangling feet. Other points of vantage filled up in a few minutes, and then—

"Pipe down the noise, there!"

Digitized by Google

The officers appeared with studied decorum and took seats on the chairs placed on the opposite side of the ring.

Various elimination bouts were fought off with the usual varying interest, but with this immense difference from the insipid fare presented by many a sporting club: every man there was out to win; each contestant did his level best. There was less science, perhaps, but infinitely more blood, and the souls of Uncle Sam's boys in blue sang pæans of joy.

Then came an interval, and the C. P. O. who acted as announcer and all-round conductor of ceremonies called:

"Scientific exhibition by J. Hynes and the Mystery!"

He grinned in huge delight at his superior knowledge of the surprise packet.

Hynes climbed into the ring and stood looking very gnarled and rugged with a half grin on his face while his shipmates cheered him loudly. With the prospect of an interesting bout of the sport that he loved his grouch had temporarily disappeared.

The cheering died down to an expectant silence; everybody was curious to know who this mystery might be. Then a lithe, smooth-muscled figure ducked swiftly under the ropes and walked directly to his corner to have the gloves put on. The men looked at him twice. There was something familiar, and yet—then:

"Whe-e-w! — Jeez! — Goshamighty! Loot'n't Lee!—Say, whad'ja know!"

Hynes took longer to recognize his opponent, or rather, his partner in the exhibition. The thing was so far from his mind, so beyond the limits of the probable, that it took an appreciable time to impress itself on his consciousness. Then his grin faded and turned to a twisted bitter look of the uttermost depth of disgust. This was the last straw.

After all that had happened, after all that had passed between them, that he should now be compelled to dance through three rounds of glove tapping with the one man on board whom he felt that he wanted to hammer with his fists! An exhibition spar —the one way in which an enlisted man could come in contact with an officer—and it would have to be a parlor play with all the grinning ship's company present to see that it went no further. "Butchered to make a Roman holiday." Hynes knew that he had touched the extreme bottom of life's bitterness.

But Lieutenant Lee had nothing of the appearance of a man who was taking the thing as a play. He stood looking very sober and grim as he adjusted his gloves. There was a light in his eyes as of a great resolve, the outcome of many an hour of anguished thought.

"Time!" the C. P. O. called; and the men advanced to the center, Hynes very bitterly schooling himself with all his practised boxer's control to hold back his natural anger and "play light."

They shook hands, and instantly: *Thud! Bang!* Lieutenant Lee planted a stiff left and crossed over a heavy right flush on the nose. It stung badly. Hynes stepped back, blinking with the suddenness of it, and very nearly did he lose his temper and rush in to throw all consequences to the winds and annihilate his enemy. Was this officer-man so utterly shameless as to take advantage of his rank to make a goat out of him who had to spar gently?

He sucked in his lower lip and bit it in red fury, the hotter because controlled. Lieutenant Lee slid in again, made a quick pass and deliberately fell into a clinch with his chin well over the other's shoulder. Hynes strained to throw him off with a feeling of loathing, and then he heard a quick low voice in his ear.

"I owed you this, Hynes. You've got three rounds—better make the most of it, 'cos—believe me—I'm going to."

The clinging arms slipped away and the lieutenant stood before him again, swaying in alert balance.

Understanding came to Hynes slowly, and with it a vague sense of relief from the oppression of weeks. Slowly the bitter twist in his hard face faded into the grin of contentment. While he still wondered; *bang!* again. The lieutenant darted in with a clean straight left high on the cheek bone and slipped out to safety.

"Whe-ee! Looka that foot - work," breathed somebody from a turret. "Some boy, that loot'n't."

Hynes advanced, still grinning. Quick as light the lieutenant was in on him, hitting with both hands. There was a firework display of slashing, whirling arms, the *thud, thud, thud* of heavy blows, preceded by short grunts of furious exertion, then

Digitized by Google

a gasp and Lieutenant Lee slipped down on one knee.

The boys on the turret whistled with amazement. This "scientific exhibition" looked more like a fight than anything they had seen yet. Some of the officers looked serious; but it was Lieutenant Lee's affair; doubtless he knew what he was doing.

The lieutenant was on his feet again in an instant. Without waiting he went in, slugging with all his strength. He drove Hynes right across the ring with the force of his attack, and on the ropes they stood and punched like professionals. Suddenly Hynes ducked prettily under a smashing swing and landed on the officer's solar plexus with a force that drove a gasping grunt from him.

The officer backed away smiling gamely but holding a low guard. Hynes rushed him all the way back across the ring and slugged him over the ropes with short drives to the body. The lieutenant began to sag at the knees.

"Aa-ah!" came a long gasp from the turrets and, *bing!* went the bell.

The scandalized C. P. O. rushed round to Lieutenant Lee's corner. This thing was past a joke.

"He's fightin' too rough, ain't he, sir? Better call it off—or will I go over an' caution him?"

Lee shook his head vigorously.

"Oh no, that's all right, Masters," he gasped. "You let him alone. We're enjoying ourselves."

The C. P. O. stood wondering, half undecided whether to go over and warn Hynes on his own account. Then the gong clanged again.

LIEUTENANT LEE sprang up for the second round with a smile that rivaled Hynes' cheerful grin. He was more cautious this time; he was getting on to the rugged seaman's way of fighting. Close work was what he ought to avoid. On the strength of this decision he stung the other twice in quick succession with a straight left and took no return. Hynes grinned in appreciation and circled. *Smash!* The officer caught him off his balance and rocked his head back between the shoulder-blades.

Hynes rushed and swung wickedly but the blow missed by a foot; the officer ducked beautifully and drove hard on his diaphragm. This time it was Hynes who grunted. The officer followed right after him, shooting over a lightning left and crossing a heavy right from time to time, never giving him a chance to recover. He drove him into a corner. Hynes extricated himself with beautiful foot-work, but as he ducked, the officer slammed down a short right chop on his neck. The blow, coupled with his own impetus, rolled him to the center of the ring, where he lay in a heap.

The turrets rose in a body and roared. Though there was a certain inevitable class feeling which made them stout partisans of their own man, they had to admire the supreme prettiness of the officer's work. "Some boy, that officer," as the critic on the turret had said; "he must have been beautifully taught." Being a "scientific exhibition," there was, of course, no referee and no count, but Hynes was up well within what would have been six.

He advanced looking rather sheepish; he was learning something too. He sidestepped cleverly to the expected straight left and smashed a counter on the officer's cheek. Lee staggered, but countered again like light, and the bell broke on a whirlwind of flashing arms and sheer toe-to-toe slugging which brought the boys to their feet howling and hugging themselves for joy.

There was a thin smear of red on Lee's cheek. The C. P. O. hovered anxiously near, but the officer waved him away. The expression on his face was one of complete contentment. He was paying his debt, and paying it, if anything, with interest. The officers looked on, surprised but impassive.

"I never knew that Lee was such a bear," said the captain quietly.

"Oh yes, sir. Annapolis champion two years ago. Cleverest man in years, the coach said."

"Hm, is that so? Well, it looks like he needs to be. Never saw anything like this in my life."

Bing!

"Last round," called the C. P. O., having forgotten entirely that he was watching merely an exhibition.

Hynes came in grinning grimly. He was not getting quite so much out of his three rounds as he had thought he might. No slouch, this gold-lace officer. *Smack!* went

Digitized by Google

that clean left full into his face, and he threw back his head and sniffed; he knew that the claret had been tapped that time. *Smash!* on the instant, hard into his Adam's apple. The scalding tears blinded him.

Bang! a heavy right over his eat, and a swish as a whirling yellow arc missed his jaw by a fractional inch. There was not a second's respite. He bored in with lowered head and lurched into a desperate clinch.

"Break!" shouted the C. P. O., as if he were refereeing a championship battle. "Break away there!" And they flung each other off.

"Go to it, Heinie," yelled an excited marine. "Now's yer time!" And Hynes rushed, hitting ferociously to get into short range. A hard drive reached his body. He grunted again and bored in for more. This time he would not be denied. The lieutenant, carried away by the exhilaration of combat, forgot his previous lesson and stood up to him and just slugged. Toe to toe for a full minute short jabs and hooks and grunting drives smashed and thudded against the heaving bodies while the spurting stream from Hynes' nostrils transformed them both into a gorgeous gory mess.

The turrets behaved like an East Side sporting club audience, and nobody called for order. Then a smashing right over the ear reminded Lee that distance was his forte. Instantly he was out of the whirl and loosed a tremendous straight lead at his following opponent. Hynes walked right into it. It shook his sturdy frame so that he fairly quivered with the impact. A lightning succession of the same medicine drove him into a corner where the lieutenant fairly climbed on to him and rocked him from one side to the other with short rights and lefts.

Hynes tried to duck out of the deadly angle. Lee was waiting for it. A swishing uppercut took him full on the chin and strightened him back with a jerk far over the post. *Smash! Ugh! Bang!* The relentless blows tattooed on his unprotected body. The yells of the men began to sound far away. He tried desperately to get back to a defensive position. And, *Bing!* the bell left him standing, holding on to the ropes.

It was minutes before the uproar subsided. The clamor was disgracefully undignified and hardly in keeping with discipline; but the captain's face, the barometer of shipboard life, showed no storm signal.

"My sacred honor," he was murmuring. "Best thing I've seen in years. Gentlemen, that was one fight!"

And nobody contradicted him.

The "exhibitors" came to the center and shook hands with each other.

"Wish it could have gone another three, Hynes," said Lee in a low voice.

Hynes grinned and shook his head.

"Not me, sir; I don't."

And so ended the best card on the ship's program ever.

LATER Floppy Diss came upon Hynes bathing an eye and breaking regulations by whistling cheerfully through his teeth. In view of his battered appearance the tempter thought he might venture to point a moral.

"Yeah, wha'd I tell you?" he jeered. "Y' can't expec' no justice from a norf'cer. Look what he done fust off, an' now he's made a monkey outa you before the whole ship's comp'ny. You'll never get square till you lay for 'm ashore with a bag o' shot."

Hynes snaked out a knotty arm and gripped the sedition monger by the neck. Then with the greatest deliberation and scientific skill he proceeded to adminster to him a very proper beating.

"Lemme tell you this, Floppy me son," he panted between instalments. "Loot'n't Lee's a gentleman, somep'n what you'll never unnerstan'. 'N if he ever forgets hisself an' spits on you, you'll be cleaner'n you are now. Now get to blazes outa here y' rat, an' run an' report me for lickin' you. Beat it, y' poison toad!"

Digitized by Google

GASTON OLAF AND BIG BUSINESS

FOUR PART STORY
PART III

By Henry Oyen

Author of "Gaston Olaf," "Little Marie," etc.

The first part of the story quickly retold in story form

"THAT'S the good old Snow Country," exulted Gaston Olaf Thorson. He turned to the river-boat captain. "It's a man's country!"

"It was," returned the captain, "but things have been happening around Wolverene since you left. Now it's to be a 'business' country. You know the Universal Mines Syndicate—they're on the job.

"But Tom Pine and myself have quit mining and we are going to make lumber!" said Gaston.

"I'll say this, Big Feller," the captain remarked, "I've only seen one other agent go up this river who's as well built and seasoned as you. That's Bradley, head business man for the Universal Syndicate."

Ralph Drake, the young business manager of the syndicate, his sister Ethel, and Loomis, the engineer, all three obviously of the city, had gone up the river the day before. Gaston came upon them at the Landing, as they were about to set out for Wolverene. His arrival was fortunate. With his partner Tom Pine, he succeeded in routing a number of thugs who had just rushed the city people.

The girl from the city smiled her appreciation upon Gaston. Through the half French in his blood, Gaston was supersensitive to feminine charms. Of the other two in the party, Gaston liked Loomis and instinctively distrusted Drake.

Gaston reached Wolverene and kept on to his millsite beyond. The buildings and booms were ready, the machinery was on the way up.

"Heard anything about Bradley that might concern us?" asked Gaston. "I heard the Syndicate was out to gobble up the whole camp."

The foreman remembered that Bradley and two Syndicate cruisers had been looking around.

In town Thorson hunted up Bradley.

"Are you after our timber" he asked bluntly.

"When you get it sawed and are ready to sell me some," answered Bradley good-humoredly.

The attraction at the Empire Music Hall was Ada Adair. She was no ordinary singer. The town buzzed with tales of her voice, beauty and superior qualities.

Gaston and Tom were in front of the Empire, undecided about going in.

"I swore I'd cut out women—quit thinking about them—till the job's done," said Gaston.

But they went in—and saw that Ada Adair's charms had not been underestimated.

A few tables away sat Bradley, Loomis, Drake and his sister. Gaston was invited to join the party. The eyes of Ethel Drake rested upon Gaston in admiration. Bradley saw the look and scowled.

"I wanted to see you, Thorson, about a rush order of lumber," broke in Bradley.

"Business?" laughed Gaston. "Dear man, business for the present does not exist. But stay. Yes, the business of life exists, which is to enjoy, to relax, to forget care; be thrilled and soothed by music, amused by song, uplifted by woman's beauty."

Bradley saw that the look in Ethel Drake's eyes that *he* had hoped to awaken there was for Gaston Olaf.

Loomis and Gaston remained behind when the

Digitized by Google

others left. Gaston looked in the direction Ethel had gone and remarked—

"Why did her brother bring her North?"

"Drake is ambitious for himself—and for Ethel."

"How about you?" blurted Gaston.

"I've got eight hundred dollars in the bank, my job with Bradley and a sense of humor. I had to come North—when I heard Ethel was going with Ray to where Bradley is."

"Hm, bad as that, eh," muttered Gaston Olaf. Then when Loomis had gone: "You fool, why didn't you win her before she came North!"

Gaston Olaf described the look of hatred in Bradley's eyes to his partner.

"Bradley and I are natural-born competitors," said he. "The girl's nothing to me, but Bradley, he's my best little enemy. A smash is coming."

"He's a business man," growled Tom.

"So am I," returned Gaston. "I'll go soft and foxy."

A note came from Bradley asking Gaston Olaf to come to see him.

"See how nice and polite Bradley's note is," remarked Gaston. "That's business—speak polite and hide the knife up your sleeve. Seeing that we're business men now, we follow suit."

He went to town and found Bradley suave and polite.

"I'll give you ten thousand dollars for your timber," said the mining man.

"Multiply that by ten and you'd be nearer a reasonable figure," replied Gaston.

Bradley suddenly dropped his mask.

"We want that timber. Take my price and leave camp. Otherwise you'll be leaving with nothing."

"You've started something," said Gaston in leaving.

What would be Bradley's first move? It occurred to Gaston that Bradley would try to hire his men away or laugh them out of camp. Gaston would forestall this. He hunted up his foreman.

"If the boys will only stay in camp Saturday nights and away from town, there won't be any chance for them to get the laugh," he explained.

But on Saturday night the camp of Thorson and Pine was deserted. The men were in Wolverene, following the miners into the Empire Music Hall. Gaston and Tom stood watching.

"Wait, watch and listen," remarked Gaston.

The music had stopped. Through the doors of the hall came a howling body of men. Behind, driving them out, came the infuriated loggers.

"Bradley told you to hire my men, hey?" said Gaston to a mine foreman, and the other acknowledged it.

Gaston noticed Ada Adair, standing at one side.

"So you come to town occasionally?" she asked.

"On business only," he replied. "My business tonight is to see you safely through this bunch of Indians, and to hear you sing."

In the center of the mêlée, he threw his arms about her for protection. When they emerged, her arms were tightly clasped around his neck. Their lips met. Suddenly he thought of the job and tore away.

On the same night, Bradley was giving a ball in honor of Ethel Drake. Gaston wandered in. Bradley was on the floor, dancing with Ethel. The smile on his face was not nice to see. Ethel was looking away, very unhappy. At the sight, Gaston decided to stay and have a dance with her. Finally he had his dance. As he passed out the door later he came face to face with Ada Adair.

"It's just one girl after another with you is it?" she said, her eyes blazing. Do I look like a woman who's safe to play with? You've got strong enemies around this camp. Well, you've got another now.

On Monday Gaston Olaf met Crowley, the storekeeper.

"Thorson," said he, "take some friendly advice and sell out. You don't realize the power of a big organization. They'll crush you."

"We have plenty of labor, Crowley, plenty of grub in camp, timber all safe and mill running. No, I can't see myself or Tom weakening."

A few evenings later in Ethel Drake's room in the hotel in Wolverene, Ray Drake was saying:

"Ethel, I refuse to allow you to speak to this outcast Thorson again. He's a criminal. He'll soon be shown up."

Ethel instinctively felt that some treachery was about to be done. She rode out to the sawmill and warned Gaston Olaf.

When Gaston told Tom the latest development the grizzly old partner took it calmly.

"Well, well! So you're going to be branded for a criminal, eh?"

"I'm a business man now," answered Gaston. "If I see any one coming toward me who looks like he had trouble about him, I run away."

Days passed. Then, one night, Gaston stopped in his tracks before the inert form of a woman lying on the trail. It was Ada Adair. She moaned and said she had fallen from a rock above.

"Carry me to the Frenchman's shanty," she moaned.

He carried her in, and lighted a lantern.

"Hands up," came a voice from the doorway. Four armed men filed in.

"What do you want of me?" asked Gaston.

"Want you to come back to the States with me," said the leader, "dead or alive! Got a warrant charging you with train robbery."

As they led him out, shackled, Gaston turned to the woman who had trapped him.

"I didn't think it of you," he said.

At three o'clock in the morning, Tom Pine was awakened by a pounding. It was Ada Adair.

"They've got him—get a gun—we'll save him!" she cried. "I drew him into their hands for revenge, but I can't go through with it."

"Tell me quick. Have they got the boy?"

"Yes. They pretend they're detectives. But they're nothing but a lot of hired thugs—killers."

"Lead the way," he said.

They saved time by paddling across the lake. Then they landed and crept up to the cabin where Gaston was confined. Ada went on ahead and induced the leader to come out. Tom covered him with his rifle, at the same time remaining hidden from the rest in the cabin.

"Tell the others to come out with their hands in the air," he ordered.

The leader obeyed. The thugs were disarmed and Gaston unshackled. The cowed men were driven through the timber to the road to the landing.

Ada Adair looked into Gaston Olaf's face.

"It's more than square," said he, putting out his hand.

Digitized by Google

XIV

GASTON led the way back to the main road, walking with a slow, dragging step and the old man followed silently. He knew that a change of mood would come soon, and he waited patiently for developments. As they struck the road and saw the tracks left by Carns and his henchmen the red flood of rage surged into the young man's countenance, to be followed by the white of hard-fought and controlled anger.

"He handled me—handled me and I had no come-back," he said bitterly. "I've been handled by a dirty, hired butcher."

Tom Pine looked up at his partner's face and was glad that the dirty, hired butcher was not within reach at that moment.

"They put their dirty handcuffs on me. They shoved me around. Carns poked me with the muzzle of his gun. God! I'll have the shame of it on me for the rest of my natural life."

"No you won't, no you won't."

Pine sensed that a chance for his ready tongue had presented itself and fairly exploded with language.

"Nothing of the sort, boy, nothing of the sort; because it's all part of the game and you've got the pot. Yessir, by cripes! They had the deal, they marked the cards, they dealt themselves the high hand, and after all that, the chips have come to you. And, why? Why simply because you was bigger than they allowed for, and you let that guy handle you, which they figgered you wouldn't, and kept your head and lived to kick him out of the game. Gaston—Gaston Olaf François Thorson—I tell you just as sure as you stand here you've won one of the tightest plays in the big game that we're bucking, and that's what you'll remember—that you spoiled their play, and they figgered it would end you."

"I was a good business man and took their dirt, you mean?" broke out Gaston bitterly. "But I never thought I'd ever live to take dirt from a cur like Carns."

"Carns? Pooh! What's Carns? Just a hired dog, as you said, and it's the owner that we're after. If you'd 'a' fought they'd 'a' downed you, and Bradley would have won. And do you want that?"

"No, be gad!" cried Gaston with a flash of the old humor and fire. "And that's why I took the dirt from Carns. This game is bigger than a little pride. What was their idea, Tom? What were they after?"

"They were after getting you out of the way, boy."

"I know. But what for? What have they planned to do while they had me away? Was it the mill? No; they knew you'd be there all the time. The camp? MacLean's a good man; but they might have another scheme for getting our men away? Or stopping our logging?"

He looked up as a torn rag of snow cloud obscured the morning sun.

"Hello! Snow coming, and I'll bet there'll be enough of it to freeze a road on. Then we'll be able to do some real logging. We can't let them stop us now. Tom, you hike back to the mill as fast as you can. I'm going to hit off through the brush in a bee-line for camp, and I'm going to get there as fast as these legs will let me."

His thoughts kept pace with the feverish speed at which he traveled. By this time the story would be circulating about town; Bradley, through his various channels, would have seen to that. The town would be rather astounded: What? Thorson a train robber? Taken back to the States by detectives who had unearthed his hiding-place? What do you know about that!

The story would come to Ethel Drake; how he had been arrested and taken south. But she would not believe it; she had said that she *knew* it couldn't be so.

Gaston promptly switched his thoughts away from the line they were following. That stuff was all beside the question. What he had to concern himself with was the move that Bradley had planned against Thorson and Pine during the former's enforced absence. To get to camp; to see what might be happening; or to see that all was well, that was his job, and he did it on the run when the trail permitted.

It began to snow as he neared camp, a light, soft fall which presaged a world deeply covered with white. In the dead calm which accompanies such a snow-fall Gaston's heart leaped with confidence as he heard in the timber ahead the crack of axes, the swish, the roar, the *boo—oo—oom!* of trees falling.

"They're still making timber, at least," he mused.

He came upon a pair of sawyers slicing a tree up into saw logs.

Digitized by Google

"Where's Sandy?" he called at them.

They started as they saw him. Then they shouted.

"Red, roaring Judas priest! That you, boss? We heern they'd got yeh and, be —, we was goin' to raise —— if you didn't come back all right."

"Oh, I'm a train robber," responded Gaston. "Regular crook."

"Don't give a —— 'f yeh be. What'd you do, boss; smash the posse and leave the pieces lay where they fell?"

"Tom Pine bailed me out."

Gaston went on and found MacLean putting the last touches on the road to the river.

"That's right," said Gaston as if nothing had happened. "This is going to be a big snow; we'll do some logging now. You needn't look at me as if I were a ghost, Sandy; feel of me and make sure."

"A man came out from town," said MacLean, when he had recovered himself. "He said you'd been arrested and taken out. Then he ducked, so I missed him with an ax-handle. He stood down in the tote-road and hollered back that it was all over with this business, and the camp would be closed up in a day or two, so we might as well quit right then."

"What did you do?"

"I can't run fast enough to catch a porcupine on this darn foot of mine. What could I do? He got away."

"Hm. They're playing a bigger game than that," mused the young man. "Nothing else happened, Mac?"

"Nope."

Thorson did not exult or feel too confident. The new caution which he had developed since he realized how stern and careful was the game he must play against Bradley, repressed the old boyish ebullition of spirits.

"It may be the mill," he warned himself. "We'll see if there comes any word from Tom."

As the hours passed with no bad news from the mill he grew more confident. Was it possible that he had once more beaten Bradley? He was unable to convince himself that he had, but he refused to waste time pondering over a problem which he had no hope of solving, and shedding his mackinaw he threw himself into work at a pace that the huskiest lumber-jack in camp strove in vain to emulate. The men were quite convinced that he had escaped from the grip of the law by disabling or slaying his captors, so their opinion of him rose akin to worship.

"WE'RE running short of grub," said MacLean two days later. "Crowley ought to begin delivering that big order pretty soon to see us through the Winter."

"He couldn't haul it up from the landing until he got some sleighing," replied the boss. "There's a couple car-loads of it. It ought to come along now that the snow has come. What are you short of?"

"Flour. The cook tells me he hit the bottom of the last barrel this morning. We've drawn all our stock down at Crowley's."

"I'll write him a note to loan us a couple barrels until our order comes up."

Gaston scribbled a few lines, and MacLean sent the tote-teamster to town with a light sleigh. Gaston did not give the matter another thought until evening when the man came driving back to camp with an empty sleigh.

"What's wrong?"

The teamster looked puzzled.

"I dunno. You better go in and see 'em yourself in the morning, boss. There's something funny down there."

"Wouldn't Crowley loan us any flour?"

"I didn't see Crowley. It was his head clerk. He wouldn't say yes, and he wouldn't say no. He says he couldn't do anything for me; and that you'd better come in and see 'em yourself in the morning."

"Crowley's away and the stock is low and I suppose the clerk was afraid to do anything," was Gaston's comment. "All right; I'll go down in the morning."

He drove cheerfully away from camp shortly after sunrise next day. The day was such as he loved; a foot of clean snow covering the ground, the branches of trees bending under their white load; the air was so sharp that the skin tingled, and the sunlight was rosy in contact with the snow. The old horse in the shafts experienced similar stimulation from the morning and sought to reproduce the pace of his long-past youth. Gaston quieted him with an easy pull and soothing words.

"Whoa, Dan Patch! Your dancing days are over, old boy. Want to get yourself all sweated up and get stiff on the way

Digitized by Google

home? Steady down, steady down; that's the boy."

Arriving before Crowley's, his entire attention was absorbed in wrapping the old beast comfortably in his blanket, and as a consequence he noticed no change. He entered the store breezily as usual, pausing a moment to warm his hands at the sheet-iron heater in the middle of the room.

"Crowley in?" he asked the head clerk.

"Step into the office," was the evasive reply. Gaston strode to the end of the room and knocked.

"Come in," said a voice, not Crowley's.

He flung open the door. Crowley was not present. In his chair was sitting Ray Drake, who looked up at the intruder with no change of countenance and said:

"Well?"

The logger entered and closed the door. For several seconds the only sound in the room was the ticking of the round clock on the wall and the purr of the stove out in the store.

"Where's Crowley?" he asked finally.

"Crowley?" Drake elevated his brows. "Interested in his whereabouts, Thorson? A waste of time, I assure you, because where Crowley is at present doesn't matter to you in the least—now."

Thorson experienced the same sensation which comes to a man when he discovers in the heart of the wilderness that he is completely and hopelessly lost. Weak men in the desolation of this sensation cry out and run madly in circles; strong men tighten their lips and stand still.

"Where is Crowley?" repeated Gaston steadily.

"Right at this moment? Well, let's see." Drake looked speculatively up at the clock. "I can't say with any great degree of certainty, but my guess is that by this time he is in Montreal."

"When is he coming back?"

Drake smiled just a trifle.

"Mr. Crowley," he said precisely, "is not coming back."

The clock ticked noisily, the stove purred.

"You mean—he's left camp—gone out—for good?"

"For good. Very much for his own good; he got his price."

"What!"

"We asked him to put a price on his entire business, with the proviso that he leave camp, at once and for good. He named the price. We paid, and so Crowley has gone."

Gaston smothered the still whisper of fear that was rising within him.

"Crowley left something for me, I suppose?" he said calmly.

"For instance?"

"Well, first of all a letter."

Drake shook his head.

"An order for our goods—the goods that's coming to us?"

"No."

There was another space of silence.

"You're running this business now for the Syndicate, Mr. Drake?"

"Yes; until I put in a system and get it running on a business basis."

"I see. Well, you've gone through Crowley's papers, of course? You found an agreement between Crowley and us?"

"Yes. Crowley was very slack, unbusinesslike. The document you mention is unwitnessed, it is undated, it is in improper form; it is not worth the paper it's written on."

"Good God, man!" exploded Gaston. "Do you mean to tell me you're going to repudiate Crowley's obligations?"

"Not his legal obligations. Certainly not. If you have any legal demands on Crowley's business let us know and we'll meet them promptly. But any loose, unbusinesslike, personal arrangement which you may have made is not binding upon us."

Gaston's expression as he heard this was one of bewilderment rather than anger.

"I can understand you doing this—you and the Syndicate—because that's the style of your tribe. But Crowley is an old-timer in the bush—I can't understand his shaking hands on that deal and then running out on me."

"Mr. Crowley was something of a business man in spite of being an old-timer. We had a conference, and he was, well—convinced. He had business sense enough to see the difference between complete ruin and a satisfactory price for his business. We offered him his choice and he took——"

"He made a contract with us to furnish us supplies at a darn stiff figure!" Gaston had suddenly leaned over the desk. "Are you going to be white and make good?"

Drake blanched and shrank back in his chair, but he was on his own ground; the Syndicate was behind him, and his training

Digitized by Google

had taught him that the man at the desk always is supreme.

"I am afraid not," he replied. "Our supplies are all contracted for elsewhere."

"There's a whole shipment on the way here now that's ours. Ordered for us. Are they contracted for elsewhere?"

"Well—have you anything to show for your claim to these goods? Any receipts for payment, or something of the sort?"

"Why, darn it, man, you'll find every sack, box and barrel marked, 'T. & P. Camp'."

"Via Crowley; don't forget that. Crowley now is the Universal Syndicate Stores. Those goods are down at the Landing now, and they come here instead of going to your camp. Our goods, you know; go see your lawyer."

"You shut down on us then, do you?"

Drake nodded.

"We've got nothing for you, Thorson."

He made to rise as it to usher his visitor out, but the latter clamped thumb and forefinger on Drake's throat and held him down.

"You're too small for me to hammer, Drake, too small body and soul; and you've got a sister." He leaned close to his gasping victim. "Do you know what keeps me from packing iron and going on the warpath this afternoon? She's the answer. So when you see Mr. Bradley tonight you can tell him he's alive simply because it would hurt your sister to hear I'd snuffed him out.

"But now listen, you poor toady, and get every word straight so you can carry it right to your owner, Bradley. This crooked deal won't stop me; the fight's just begun. What you've done to me here is just enough to start my blood moving. Tell Bradley I ain't even discouraged; I'm just awake."

He let go his hold, laughed and went out.

XV

MANNING, the head clerk of the store that had been Crowley's, was a curious man. Moreover he longed to be the bearer of information which might make his position more secure with his new employer. Wherefore he hurried to the front window and from behind a crate of ax-handles peered eagerly after the departing woodsman.

What he saw was a surprise and disappointment to him. Thorson stood before the store pulling on his driving mittens with a calmness and leisure of movement that seemed to indicate complete content with himself and events. He stepped forward briskly. What was he going to do now? Where was he going?

The head clerk's excitement subsided suddenly. Gaston Olaf's first move was to put back in place the blanket which the old horse had managed to twist underfoot. Next he stood idly rubbing the beast's nose. The head clerk, deciding that a man who could waste time that way was not going to do anything, returned to his work.

The clerk saw only Gaston's back. Had he been able to see his face he would have been shocked, for if ever the impulse toward hot-blooded murder clouded a young man's countenance it was that of Gaston Thorson at that moment. He knew that some one would be watching him from the store and therefore he forced himself to present a calm appearance, from the rear. He knew that if he did not hold himself in tightly until the red mist in his mind cleared he would yield to the old savage impulse that stirred him.

When he pulled on his gloves so leisurely it was only by sheer will-power that he kept himself from hurling the gloves on the ground and his mackinaw after them; when he lounged so quietly over and arranged the horse's blanket he was fighting the impulse in his legs which would have carried him straight to Bradley's office. He rubbed the nag's nose and apparently spoke to him, but what he said was addressed to himself:

"Hang on to yourself, boy. Don't lose the game by a fight."

That was what saved him, the instinct to win the game. Strange pictures floated through his mind in those minutes of struggle with the red mist of murder, scornful faces of Viking ancestors, laughing at his caution, scraps of atavism which he fought away.

"You've got to play according to the rules," he muttered.

He pondered over that awhile.

"So have they," he concluded, and patiently he turned to the law.

The law, as represented by Attorney George Hollenbeck, spoke anxiously and to the point when the tale was done.

Digitized by Google

"That contract for supplies, how about it? You surely took care to see that you had one made out in proper form?"

"Certainly—considering that it was between two white men," replied Gaston Olaf. "There was the agreement in black and white, and Crowley put his John Henry on it and I put mine. And we shook hands on it. What more does a man want?"

"Something that will be some good in court," retorted the lawyer.

"Isn't the court—and the law—square? It's down there in black and white, I tell you. Anybody can see it who can read. Crowley was one of us, one of the old-timers; he drew up the paper."

"And you didn't see that it was dated, or witnessed, or made valid in any manner."

"Eh? You've heard about it, then?"

"The Syndicate's lawyer showed me a copy of it. Asked me if that was the way I protected my clients. Why in the world didn't you come to me with it?"

"Because I didn't know things in the bush had come to that stage where two white men making a deal needed a lawyer to make 'em be honest."

"That agreement," said Hollenbeck bluntly, "won't stand up in court. You might just as well not have made it."

"But that shipment of supplies, George," cried Thorson. "They're marked for us; they're coming to us; they're ours by every right."

"Granted, granted," said the lawyer. "By every right they're yours, except by law. If you had the goods in your possession, if Crowley had delivered them to you, you would have a clear title. As it is—my boy, you haven't got a legal leg to stand on. You have no contract by which, through court procedure, you can force the Universal Syndicate to fulfil Crowley's agreement with you. They have the goods and you cannot force the delivery of said goods to yourself."

"You can't help me, then; the law won't see that I get a square deal?"

"I can go ahead and tie that shipment up——"

"I need it right away, today—tomorrow sure."

"But you'd never get the goods, and we wouldn't win out in the end; so what's the use? Now I tell you the smartest thing for us to do, and that is for me to try to buy some flour for you from some other store. I don't think they'll sell to you; the Syndicate doesn't overlook any bets. You do a little sit right here, Thorson, and I'll go out and do a little detective work."

Hollenbeck went, returning in half an hour with a glum face.

"I'm afraid they've sewed you up tighter than we suspected, boy. Every barrel of flour in camp is sold, or needed for regular customers. The Syndicate has got hold of the freighting game, and they're hauling grub in in driblets. They have pretty near got this camp by the throat."

Gaston rose deliberately.

"That's the best you can do for us, eh, George?"

"What in the dickens can I do, man? It's a darn shame, and all that, but after all it's business, and ——"

"Business is business. Sure enough. Well, so long, George, and I certainly am much obliged to you."

"Oh, you needn't get sarcastic," grumbled the lawyer. "I've done the best——"

"I mean it!" snapped Gaston from the doorway. "I certainly am much obliged to you."

THE pale little crescent of new moon which peered over the timber that night saw a strange sight at the logging camp of Thorson & Pine. In the opening space before the bunk-shack five huge logging sleighs, each drawn by four horses, stood waiting. The sleighs bore on their fourteen-foot-wide bolsters wooden frames not unlike hay-racks.

A voice shouted, and the door of the bunk-house opened, flashing a wide bar of light upon the scene outside, and the voice called:

"Olson, Ambrose, Hanley, Durant."

Four men slipped out and eagerly took their places on a sleigh. Again the voice called four names, and four more men stepped forth. This continued until each of the five sleighs held its load of excited but silent men.

"Now there's no use the rest of you fellows raising a howl," snapped Sandy MacLean at the bunk-house. "Shut the door; that's all that's going."

"All loaded, Mac?" asked Gaston from the front sleigh.

"All loaded, boss," came the reply, and the sleighs moved swiftly out of sight in the dark timber.

Digitized by Google

Down the tote-road they went, straight toward Wolverene, but Wolverene never saw the sleighs that night. Half a mile before they reached the spot where the road emerged from the timber into the town clearing a short, squat figure appeared in the road, saying softly:

"Swing to the left of the big birch, boys. It isn't a road, but it'll have to do."

"Get in here, Tom," called Gaston, and Tom Pine swung himself up beside his partner. "Take the ribbons, Tom. Drive up close, boys, and keep this sleigh in sight."

In spite of the darkness Tom managed to find the blazes which he had cut during the afternoon, and by following these blazes the sleighs circled crudely around Wolverene and arrived at the road running to Frost Bite Landing without having been in sight of the town. In the road, the first sleigh halted, the others following suit.

"Anything break?"

"Yep; Sam busted his pipes cussing."

A subdued laugh ran down the line and the teams moved on.

Daylight appeared as they drew in sight of the Landing. The teams drove past the hotel, just waking for the day, and swung in a line up to a long, one-story log warehouse. The building bore a small sign: "Universal Syndiate. Storehouse No. 1."

Gaston knocked and a sleepy watchman appeared.

"We've come for our goods, the shipment maked 'T. & P'."

"Store ain't open yet," muttered the watchman. "The boss is over eating his breakfast."

"Go get him. Tell him to come or I'll take the stuff without his consent. No, you needn't lock the door; I'll watch the store."

"You will not." The watchman bent over to insert his key, and stiffened as iron fingers fell on his neck.

"Go and get the boss," said Thorson, and the watchman stumbled away.

A shocked and bustling clerk appeared.

"What's this—what's this?"

"My goods—the stuff marked 'T. & P.' I've come for them."

"You can't—" The clerk looked at the young woodsman's face and changed his speech. "Ha—have you got an order for them?"

"Yes."

"Ca—can I see it?"

"Sure. Come here."

The clerk peered into the sleigh where Gaston pointed and saw two rifles on the blankets in the bottom of the box.

"That—that isn't an order," he faltered courageously. "I'm under orders not to let——"

"All right, boys," said Gaston, and led his men into the building.

"I tell you you can't have it!" squeaked the clerk. "You've got to get out at once."

"Right over here, boys." The men attacked the vast heap of goods which filled one end of the room. There were barrels, boxes, bags, crates, bales, packages. "Be sure not to take a thing that hasn't got our mark on it. Tom and Sandy, you throw your eyes on everything that goes into the sleighs. Look for our mark. Now, go to it, shanty-boys."

He turned to the clerk and laid a hand on his shoulder.

"Son, this is too stiff a game for you to sit in. You've done your duty and ordered us out; but we've come for what belongs to us, and we're going to get it."

At the end of an hour not a package marked "T. & P." was on the floor, and the sleighs with their huge loads were starting back to camp.

"And now, Mr. Bradley," muttered Gaston, "the stuff's in my possession, and you'll have to go some to take it away!"

XVI

ATTORNEY HOLLENBECK was the first to bring Gaston word of the stir that his morning raid on the food store had created. The lawyer came driving out to camp late in the next night, with considerable alarm displaying itself in his expression and manner.

"You didn't do it, did you?" was his greeting as he stepped from the cutter. "If you did, Bradley has got you."

"What's the row?" asked Thorson.

"The Syndicate warehouse down at the Landing has been robbed, and the talk in town is that you did it."

"I did."

Hollenbeck stared in surprise.

"Do you mean to say that you stand here and admit to me that you're guilty of —of doing a trick like that at a time like this?"

Digitized by Google

"I'm guilty, all right, George. We had to have our grub and I went down and got it."

"Well, then you have done it!" cried the lawyer stamping angrily about. "I thought you had more brains. Don't you know that you've put yourself in Bradley's power now? He did his best to find some way of putting you in wrong with the law, and couldn't find any. Now you accommodate him by going and committing robbery, and he's got you right where he wants you."

"We had to have the grub," repeated Gaston doggedly. "There was no other way of getting it. And you're responsible for it."

"I? Me? Responsible for this crazy action of yours?"

"Exactly. You said if the stuff was in my possession there might be another story to tell, or words to that effect. That's why I said I was much obliged to you. Then I remembered what Crowley said to me about business some time back: 'He will take who hath the power, and he will hold who can.'

"Well, I had the power to take, and if I'm man enough to hold what I took this camp will run most of the Winter, and that's my little job for the present."

"And in the meantime you'll be laying down in the jail at Pottsville. Have you thought of that?"

"Yep. I don't like the idea of jail, but Sandy MacLean can handle the camp here pretty well, and Tom can run the saw-mill; and if it will help to put the job through, well, I guess I could stand jail even."

"If Bradley ever gets you in jail you're done for. He'll pile it on you till he breaks your back. You can't law-fight people as big as the Syndicate; they're too big; and you've been kind enough to give them an absolutely clear case against you."

"I can't believe that, George. We didn't take a thing that wasn't ours; there's the marks to prove it on every package. Did you think I was going to lay down without a fight simply because these people had bluffed old Crowley into double-crossing me? If you did, come around some day and get acquainted; you don't know me."

"That's all very fine, Thorson. You couldn't and wouldn't lay down, I know that. But the fact still remains that by playing pirate like this you've played straight into Bradley's hand. You've given him the law as a club, and unless I'm mistaken he'll be swinging it soon and hard."

"All right. I'm here to be swung at. The grub's here, too, and well cached. As long as they have grub our men will log for us, even if I am in jail. And," he concluded doggedly, "I haven't made up my mind yet whether I'll go, if it comes to that."

"But I have," retorted Hollenbeck grimly, "and I'm your lawyer and you are going to listen to me—you are not going to break the law any further. You're not going to hide out and outlaw yourself, and you're not going to do anything so silly as to resist arrest. You've made Bradley happy as it is, and you're not going to do anything more to help him along. I am in this fight with you until the highest court has handed down a decision. We are going to give them a fight and you're not to make the case any harder against yourself than it is. Now, let's have it straight: You didn't break and enter, did you? You didn't use force, or threaten any one?"

"No, but I didn't kiss any one, either," replied Gaston. "What's the use of all those details, George—the chuck was ours and I went and got it."

"Those little details may be everything in this case. Bradley will try to make it robbery by force, and all that, and there's a lot of room for good work on the details. Give me the whole thing, down to the smallest detail you can remember."

When Gaston had obeyed the lawyer shook his head.

"The clerk's protest is a bad count against us. You're up against it awfully hard, Thorson."

"I have been for some time."

"But we'll let 'em know that they're in a fight," concluded the lawyer with genuine enthusiasm. "It's as pretty a case as I ever handled."

AT NOON the next day, as the men were rushing into the cook-shack, a cutter came driving briskly into the camp clearing and whirled to a halt in the midst of the crew. The single occupant of the sleigh cut short the tune which he was cheerily whistling, and leaped out. He was a small, brisk man, clean-shaven, dapper, and the men eyed him distrustfully.

"Ah! Fine day, boys, fine day!" he greeted, rubbing his hands. "Bit chilly,

Digitized by Google

though, for driving; yes, a bit chilly. Ah! Here we are."

He drew out a blanket and covered his horse. That was a point in his favor; still the men regarded him with suspicion.

"Ah! Stand still there, my trusty steed. Wouldn't do, wouldn't do at all to have you get chilled. Steady now, steady. Ah, there you are, there you are, all tucked in and snug."

He swung around, rubbing his hands, and becoming businesslike.

"Where's the boss, boys?" he asked in a different tone.

A Frenchman answered him after a long, hostile pause.

"W'at for you want see deh boss, M'sieu'?"

"Business." The word was snapped out sharply, and the little man's eyes fell on the Frenchman coldly. "Business, my friend. Now do you feel any better?"

"What kind of business?" drawled a tall Yankee. "Don't be so durned unsociable; let's hear your business."

The little newcomer looked the tall fellow over from toe to eyes, and the lumber-jack gave him back look for look.

"My tall, slab-sided friend, I'll give you a little advice: 'Don't put your fingers on a red-hot stove.' "

"Hm. You figger yourself to be red hot then, do ye?"

"Don't you put your fingers on a red-hot stove." The little man was tapping the lumber-jack's chest. "That's the way people get burnt, and for your own good I tell you that you've got your fingers in a warm spot right now. Where is the boss?"

For reply the men gathered slowly and silently in a circle about the newcomer. He watched their movements with a look of annoyance in which there was no hint of fear or shaken confidence.

"I'm the sheriff," he said, "and I'm here to find your boss, and, by James! you boys aren't going to stop me for a minute."

As if no one was in front of him he started for the cook-shack, and to their own amazement the men fell away before the advance of the intrepid little figure. Gaston, coming out of the foreman's office, saw the man and guessed his mission.

"Here I am," he called sullenly.

The sheriff turned and came up to him briskly.

"Mr. Gaston Olaf François Thorson?"

"Yes."

"I've got a paper——"

"Keep it," snapped Gaston as the sheriff prepared to open his mackinaw. "Leave it in your pocket. I know what it is. Being arrested one way or another is getting to be a habit with me."

"Now see here," said the sheriff as he caught the glint of Gaston's eyes, "don't you go playing the giddy goat, m'lad. Business is business and my business is to take you down to Pottsville, and you can depend on it that's what I'm going to do. I know how you feel, and you've got the edge on me here; but you're too young, m'lad, to put a rope around your neck by any foolish shooting trick, and it'll come to that, depend on it, if you play the goat. Now you're going back with me, and would if you were King Solomon in all his glory, and the only question is whether you've got brains enough to do the sensible thing and come along quiet."

"Whose charge will I be in down there?" demanded Gaston after a long scrutiny of the little man.

"In mine. And in good hands, too, because I never had a prisoner escape on me yet, and I've been at this game longer than I care to confess."

"Did you ever have one killed on you?"

"Not by outsiders."

"If I go with you I'll be helpless," said Gaston, "and there may be people willing to have me bumped off, in case this trial went against 'em, and if I surrender to you I couldn't do a thing to stop 'em."

The sheriff's eyes widened and grew small again.

"Now I don't know the ins and outs of this case at all," he snapped, "but one thing you can depend upon, m'lad, and that is this: Once you're in my charge I'm responsible for you, and, by James! I'll do my duty that way just as sure as I'm going to do it by taking you."

"Will you shake hands on that?"

Without hesitation the little sheriff thrust out his right hand.

"I shook with Crowley, too, and yet he did me dirt," commented Gaston when the rite was over.

"Eh? Crowley did you dirt?" The sheriff was surprised. "That's queer; he was always white so far's I knew. Now, now; don't start any nonsense, boys."

"It's all right, boys," said Gaston to the glowering men who gathered about as he

Digitized by Google

stepped into the sleigh. "The sheriff is white and I'm going with him. And I want you to do just one thing—stay in camp and make saw-logs as fast as you can."

"You getting a fair deal, boss?"

"I guess so," laughed Gaston.

"If you don't," came a growl, "we'll come down and turn Pottsville into a first-class imitation of ——!"

"And I'll be there to raise the devil with you if you do," chirped back the doughty officer. "Nice boys," he continued to Gaston as they drove out of the camp clearing. "And now what was this that you were hinting at about being in danger of getting bumped off while under arrest? Who are you afraid of?"

"Nobody," replied Gaston, "but I have enemies who want me out of the district and won't stop at anything."

He told about being captured by Carns and his men, without, however, involving Bradley or Ada Adair in the yarn.

"Hm. That's serious," was the sheriff's comment. "Who was responsible?"

"I haven't the slightest idea."

"Hm. Don't want to tell, eh, m'lad? Very well. I'm glad you spoke up. Keep my eyes peeled a little wider. Now what was that about Crowley? Crowley's a white man. You say he did you dirt?"

"If he hadn't I wouldn't be riding with you now," said Gaston; and told how Crowley had sold out, leaving his obligations unfulfilled.

The sheriff shook his head as he listened.

"No sir; no siree; that doesn't sound like old man Crowley. Crowley's square. By James! I can't believe it."

"It was hard for me to believe it, too; but there are the facts. Crowley ducked out on us; but the goods were ours, and I went down and got 'em, and here I am."

"You bet you are, m'lad," said the sheriff, whipping up the horse. "But I'll be darned, by James, I will, if I can see Crowley doing a trick like that!"

He fell into a deep study from which he emerged at the end of half an hour with the exclamation:

"No sir, by James! I can't."

Gaston smiled bitterly.

" 'Business is business'," he said mockingly. "Forget it! The question that troubles me just at present is whether you're going to take me through Wolverene?"

"Eh? Why not, why not, m'lad?"

"There's a short-cut that branches off to the right down here by a big birch," said Gaston evasively. "If you swing off there you'll save horseflesh, and Wolverene won't have me for a show."

"Hm," said the sheriff. He pondered a moment. "All right," he snapped, and he marveled at the sigh of relief that escaped Gaston when they swung off the main road.

It was Ethel Drake that the young man was thinking of, and the probability of her seeing him in the law's toils if they drove through Wolverene. She would hear of his arrest, of course, but the longer this knowledge was delayed the better.

WERE HAD HE but known he might have spared himself all these fears and hopes, for in the same hour that the sheriff came driving up to the camp Bradley and Ray Drake and Ethel were sitting at luncheon in the hotel, and Bradley, with apparent sorrow, was letting the girl know of Gaston's downfall.

"Too bad, too bad," he said in his deepest tones. "I thought he was a straight young fellow who would make his way. It must be drink that drove him to this."

"What in the world has he done?" demanded Ethel.

"Robbed our warehouse down at the Landing," replied Drake. "Threatened the clerk and watchmen with death. Yes; his real nature has come out at last. He has turned outlaw, and the sheriff has gone out to bring him to jail, where he belongs. I always knew he was a tough, but I didn't really think he was a thief."

"Too bad, too bad," repeated Bradley. "A serious offense; life imprisonment, probably. I am sorry."

Ethel made no reply until Bradley had gone, but then she turned furiously on her brother. Bradley's presence always dominated her; but Ray had no such power.

"Ray! Why did he do this? Tell me; you know; why did he do such a desperate deed?"

"How do I know, sis?" said Ray with a shrug of the shoulders. "Why does any thief steal? His instincts are wrong, I suppose."

"He stole—I mean, he took provisions for his camp, didn't he? Couldn't he obtain them any other way?"

"How do I know? Maybe he thought it cheaper to steal than buy—thieves usually do."

Digitized by Google

"Oh, that's horrid. I've a feeling that you do know, Ray, and I want you to tell me."

"Woman's intuition, eh?" laughed Drake. "No, sis; you 'tend to your own business, which is being a very sweet, attractive young lady who'll make a brilliant match one of these days, and I'll 'tend to mine. Thorson is getting what is coming to him, and a month from now you'll be wondering why you ever gave him two thoughts."

He stepped over and patted her head with patronizing affection. She was only a kid sister, and where in the world would she be if she didn't have a big brother to protect and guide her!

Ethel controlled herself until she was alone, but had Ray Drake been able to see her then he might have altered his condescending judgment of his sister.

"The fools, the fools!" she whispered to her reflection in the mirror. "They think I'm a child; they thought I couldn't see through it. It's their doing—I know it—I felt it. And they sat there insulting my intelligence with every word they spoke, thinking I couldn't understand!"

And then she began to think of her brother, Ray, and had he been able to read her thoughts that young man would have been shocked. They were anything but the thoughts a kid sister should think of her big brother. Was Ray doing something wrong? If so, could she save him from himself? Poor boy! he was mad with ambition. She must guard him; and she must teach him that she was not a child and not so easily fooled.

And then she thought of Gaston Olaf, and fifteen minutes later she was on her pony riding out to the saw-mill.

Tom Pine heard the news with a calmness that deceived the girl. In return he calmly told the story of Crowley's inexplicable treachery, the original cause of Gaston's present situation.

"Then it is this Mr. Crowley who is to blame?" she cried with relief. "Not—not anybody else?"

"It looks like it," agreed Tom. "Though the more I think of it the more it don't seem like Crowley. Crowley wasn't a law-man; Crowley was white. Now a law-man, miss, is one who only asks himself if a thing's against the law; and if it isn't he goes ahead and does it. But a white man asks himself if a thing's square, and if it isn't he don't do it. Crowley was white. It looks bad against him, but the more I think the more I don't feel certain it's him."

"Then who was it?" she faltered. "Why—why it must be Mr. Crowley's fault, Mr. Pine. It must be." Her words came brokenly, and she felt tears forming behind her eyelids. "My brother, Ray, handled the deeds. He—he—It must be Mr. Crowley's fault, don't you think so, Mr. Pine?"

"I've been telling you what I've thought, miss," replied Tom gently.

"But even if Mr. Crowley is 'white' as you call him, it might be possible for him to have done this," she protested.

"Everything's possible; but—I'm mighty sorry your brother is in this mess, miss."

"Oh! You don't mean——"

"Now, now! Don't you get startled, miss. I mean that I'm sorry that your brother happens to be with the crowd that's trying to wipe us out, because they—they're willing to do things that ain't quite right."

"My brother wouldn't do anything that wasn't right!" she said with an effort.

"Now that's the way to talk, miss; that's regular good talk. Stick by your home folks. I'm right glad to hear you say that, miss, because I figger that you know."

"What are you going to do about Mr. Thorson being in jail?" she asked after a painful pause.

"Me? Oh, I ain't going to do anything much, miss. 'Course I'm going to go and see a few people and see what I can do with 'em, but I guess most of the doing will be done by our lawyer."

She read his attitude wrong, and as she whipped her pony back to town, she thought of how pitiful it was to see Tom so resigned. Had she seen Tom at that moment she would have saved her pity. He was hurrying by a short-cut for town, and his pace was near to a run. A clerk attempted to stop him at the door of Bradley's office and Tom swept him aside and walked in.

"Bradley, I'm holding you personally responsible for the boy," was his greeting to the mining man. "You're the Skookum Chief of your gang. I don't care which of your bucks played the trick that's put my pardner where he is. You're responsible to me; and I'm here to give you a little hint: You pass the word that nothing's to happen to the boy down there. For your own good you do that; because if anything happens to him, Bradley, you'll be dead meat!"

Digitized by Google

ETHEL went straight to the store when she returned to town. Manning, the head clerk, greeted her with the news that Ray had gone to Pottsville with a Syndicate lawyer. Ethel turned in disappointment to go, but at the door she smiled upon the clerk in a manner that left that man her abject slave.

"Oh, Mr. Manning; I'm sure you can help me," she said resolutely. "You were Mr. Crowley's head clerk, too, weren't you? Yes, so I understood. My brother says you are very efficient. By the way, are you going to appear at the trial, Mr. Manning?"

"No, Miss Drake. Mr. Drake says it won't be necessary."

"But I should think it would be necessary. I'm sure that you are more familiar with the arrangements which Mr. Crowley may have made with Mr. Thorson and with my brother and so on than any one else."

"Well, I wouldn't quite go as far as to say that, Miss Drake. Of course Mr. Drake——"

"Yes, I know. But he will need witnesses to corroborate his testimony, won't he? Isn't that what it's called? There seems to be a doubt about Mr. Crowley selling out without making arrangements for delivering the goods which Mr. Thorson is said to have appropriated. Now you could testify that he did that, and if any one is to blame in that matter it is Mr. Crowley. Couldn't you?"

Manning looked at her with fallen chin, looked away in embarrassment, looked at the floor. Ethel leaned against the door to steady herself, and lured him with a smile.

"Oh, I'm Ray's sister, you know, Mr. Manning; all in the family; and you may speak as if you were speaking to Ray."

Manning raised his eyes and met the full power of her smile and was lost.

"That's why they're not calling me as a witness, Miss Drake. Mr. Drake's too shrewd for that."

"Indeed? Ah, I begin to see. Then Mr. Crowley did make arrangements——"

She broke off with a laugh, lifting her eyebrows archly.

"Ha, ha!" stammered the lost Manning. "Of course Mr. Crowley made arrangements."

"With my brother, of course."

"No. No." Manning was quite carried away. "Mr. Crowley insisted on dealing with headquarters.

"Ha ha! But 'headquarters' were too shrewd for him, I suppose?"

"Yes, yes, just as you say, Miss Drake. Too shrewd."

"I suppose the simpleton didn't know enough to get anything put down in black and white. Was that it?"

"Ha ha! No, not quite, Miss Drake. He—ha ha!—he thought he was doing a very shrewd thing himself when he got Mr. Bradley to sign an agreement to deliver that shipment to Thorson & Pine, but what good does the agreement do, Miss Drake, when Crowley's got it, and Crowley's hundreds of miles away. Ha ha! Why—why; you're not faint, Miss Drake?"

"No." Ethel waved him away with a forced smile. "No. Just a little tired. So kind of you to listen to my chatter, Mr. Manning. I'm afraid I'm taking up too much of your valuable time. I must—be going."

Out in the keen nipping air she reeled and recovered herself and went dumbly down the street. What could she do? Who could she turn to? To Tom Pine? Or to Hollenbeck, Gaston's lawyer? No. She shrank from the thought; she must shield Ray even while righting this wrong.

Who could she turn to, who could she trust absolutely?

Ah! Her gloved hands came together in a gesture of gratitude. Thank God! for good old Walter Loomis. She hurried to him with a sense of relief and joy which might have amazed her had she been calm enough to stop and analyze her feelings.

XVII

ON THE night before Gaston's case was to come up at Pottsville word came out to the men at the Thorson & Pine camp of the significance of their leader's arrest. The Syndicate was going to break him, and having broken him was going to break and drive out of the district every man who had stood by him.

No report could have suited the lumberjacks better.

"That settles it," they said. "That lets us in the game, and we'll go down and see the deal."

In vain did MacLean storm and threaten.

"The boss himself said you were to stay in camp and make saw-logs. Besides that I'll fire every mother's son of you that goes

Digitized by Google

to Pottsville. And besides that, crippled though I be, I can break the head of any man who tries to bull me in my camp."

"Sure you can, Sandy," was the response. "Come on to town and take a hand in the game."

MacLean remained in camp, and a few of the older men stayed with him on his plea that the camp must not be left unguarded, but the rest marched singing down the tote-road to Wolverene.

Arriving in town they heard more to arouse their anger. The Syndicate had managed to bring a new judge to the court at Pottsville. It was freely and loudly asserted that the new judge was on the Syndicate's pay-roll.

"Like every other official in the district!" growled some one.

"That's it, that's it! The Syndicate's going to own everything here. A man'll be afraid to take a full breath. They'll drive the white men out and bring in the Hunyaks."

Wild and impossible rumors began to circulate. Thorson had been spirited away by the Syndicate's agents. He had been shot. The sheriff had shot him; no the sheriff had been shot. One rumor arose as another was destroyed, and each added its fuel to the growing excitement. The lumber-jacks began to parade the streets in a body.

"We're the boys that cut the logs, and we're going to be in Pottsville tomorrow and see fair play!"

They shouted this and other things before the hotel, and Bradley came to a window and looked out. His appearance was greeted with a cry that caused many a hearer to start apprehensively, but Bradley smiled and shook his head.

"The poor fools! They need taming," he said. "They will be sadly surprised if they start anything at Pottsville to-morrow."

Several conservative citizens were rushing about after Tom Pine.

"Tom, you'd better get that gang back to camp," they warned when they found him. "There'll be trouble if you don't."

"Trouble!" Tom chuckled hoarsely. "Trouble, boys? Why you don't know what it means. I'm the old buck that will show you trouble if things go wrong to-morrow."

"All right, all right. But look at that crowd of yours. They'll be rioting next—you know what they are when they get going. Go and talk to them, tell them to be quiet."

"Tell —— to be quiet!" bellowed Tom. "Let the boys tear the town down and make a fire of it. The other side lighted their war signals first. They've got us licked now, but we'll let 'em know we're on the war-path before we're through with 'em."

The lumber-jacks left the hotel and surged in a body to the Empire Music Hall. There in some manner came the news that made the night sinister: The Syndicate had brought up a hired army of fighting men—company police—to run things at Pottsville. The loggers grew quiet as this news spread, and in a moment they seemed to change from overgrown boys to cold, silent men. The woodsman as a rule carries no arms. Occasionally one carries a knife, but save for this the shanty-boy's weapons of defense and offense are his two hard fists and, in dire extremities, the long, wicked calks on his shoes.

The hired fighting men of the company would not be unarmed: That was the knowledge that made the woodsmen grow quiet. And then the news was supplemented—the company police were ordered to pick a fight if the lumber-jacks came to Pottsville, and to use their weapons.

There was no more jollity for the men that night. They listened to Ada Adair's song without any keen pleasure and left the hall before the evening's performance was half over. During the next half-hour the hardware stores had a remarkable run of business.

At Pottsville the next morning the men received information which, to them, was proof conclusive that carefully planned injustice was to be perpetrated against Gaston Olaf. Court at Pottsville was held in a one-room shack capable of holding at a liberal estimate thirty people. As three or four hundred men were on hand anxious to view the proceedings it had been necessary to bar from the room all save those directly connected with the case.

"Slick work," snapped the woodsmen skeptically when this plausible explanation was made to them. "Just a little too slick to suit us."

Across the street from the courthouse was a long hitch-rail, and here the men from camp tied their teams and made their headquarters. They made no move to

Digitized by Google

enter the court-room nor to mingle with the crowd which thronged the town. They isolated themselves deliberately, and by their isolation and calm called attention to their presence.

And presently another group of men, strangers to the town and district, detached itself from the throng which milled up and down the narrow board sidewalk, and then the lumber-jacks knew that the rumors were true, and they were face to face with the Syndicate's paid fighters, and they felt quite happy. The strangers took up their stand before the courtroom, directly across the street from the woodsmen, whom they outnumbered two to one.

"By golly, they're hard ones," whispered an old lumber-jack.

They were. They were as varied and tough a lot as ever were furnished for rough work by any "detective agency"—city gangsters, Western bad men, negro criminals, a motley crew of vicious outcasts hired to bruise, maim and kill, and eager to work at their grisly trade. The woodsman leaned against their sleighs, against the hitch-rail, spat, and watched the men across the way from beneath down-pulled caps and their attention was reciprocated.

"And every man of 'em with an automatic under his pants band."

"Yes, but buckshot's better medicine than pistol bullets."

"Yep." The shanty-boys glanced to see that blankets carefully hid what lay in the bottom of the sleighs. "And a surprise is better than both."

The little sheriff glanced out of the court-room window and rubbed his forehead nervously. The slouching calm of the lumber-jacks deceived him, however; and besides he had given his word as a guarantee to his prisoner, and, by James! he would see him safely through, no matter if the whole camp got to rowing.

The tenseness of the situation outside made itself felt in the courtroom, but the machinery of the law moved on without hesitation. The judge, a huge, bull-like man, had let it be known from the beginning that he had no doubt of Gaston's guilt, and that the only question to be decided was the term of his punishment. His comments as he opened court took all hope from Gaston's heart:

"In new districts, such as this, there inevitably occur these outbreaks of lawlessness, caused by characters too weak or too vicious to control themselves when not controlled by a display of the law's power through the police. For the sake of true citizens, loyal to the law, for the sake of the progress of civilization in new districts, the punishment of such criminals must be so prompt and so severe as to serve as a deterrent to all others of similar natures. To steal foodstuffs in an isolated country, where of a necessity the supply of food is limited, is the most heinous of crimes. Which is the criminal? Oh, yes; obvious, of course. Gentlemen, please proceed."

Tom Pine rose up slowly from his seat in the rear, opened his mouth as if to speak, looked at Gaston, swallowed something, and went slowly from the room. He sagged a little at the knees as he came out, and when a sound finally came from his throat it was a croaking laugh with a tinge of madness in it. He looked to the right and to the left, and on either side he saw the threat of unfriendly eyes. He looked across to the hitch-rail and his knees stiffened.

"Boys!" his cry was part sob. "They're railroading my partner!"

Not a word came from the lumber-jacks; only they quietly whipped the blankets off what lay in the bottom of the sleighs.

"Shut that old guy up."

In the sickening silence that had fallen upon the street a leader of the Syndicate gangmen gave the order, and as a negro sprang to obey, the tension broke.

Tom Pine leaped far out into the street and whirled around, a revolver in each hand.

"They're railroading the boy, —— —— 'em!" he screamed. "They can't ——"

A roar drowned his words, and a clanking sound, and in a trice the lumber-jacks had armed themselves with the shotguns which they had hidden in the sleighs. And then down the street came galloping a horse and cutter in which rode two men, the younger of whom flogged the tired animal straight toward the spot of danger.

"Stop! Pull up, pull up!"

Bystanders ran out and strove to stop the mad drive. The driver cut at them, and shouted at the top of his voice:

"Tom Pine, Tom Pine! Look who's here!"

Tom looked, for the cutter brushed against him as the horse was stopped.

"Look out, Loomis," he growled at the driver. Then his eyes blazed fiercely, and

Digitized by Google

he leaped at the second man in the sleigh. "Crowley, by ——!"

"Pine," rang out Crowley's voice, "don't call names; hold the horse."

Crowley and Loomis tumbled from the cutter and rushed for the court-room with scarcely a look around. They jostled their way through the line of armed gunmen and entered the room. Haggard and worried, but determined to do right, Crowley stalked straight up to the Syndicate's judge and held a paper before his honor's eyes.

"Read that," he croaked, "and then eat a little crow."

The judge and the Syndicate attorney read the properly drawn agreement by which Bradley had agreed to deliver to Thorson & Pine the shipment of goods ordered for them.

"Telephone your boss," continued Crowley. "Tell him I'm here."

He sat down, clutching the paper in his hand.

"Your honor," said the Syndicate's lawyer suavely after a pause "an unforeseen development in the evidence makes it necessary for me to consult with my client."

He rushed out to a telephone and called Bradley. There was a long conversation.

"Your honor," said the attorney, returning to the court-room, "there has been a mistake. There will be no prosecution of this case. The goods were Mr. Thorson's, per an agreement made with Mr. Crowley, which had been overlooked."

A moment later the sheriff was shouting out in the street:

"Put up your guns, boys, all of you. The trial is over, and Thorson is free!"

XVIII

GASTON OLAF came out of the court-room on the run! The situation was clear to him at a glance—on one side of the street the slit-eyed, heavy-jawed gunmen, reluctant to obey the sheriff's orders; on the other the lumber-jacks, in town for a fight and anxious to have it.

He brushed the little sheriff aside and charged like a fury straight at his men.

"You want to spoil it, do you!" he roared. "Well, you can't do it. I'm boss here, too. Hop in those sleighs; get back to camp! You hear me talking!"

He flew at them like a storm. It was the only chance; if he could rush them off their feet and get them started out of town before they could collect themselves the situation would be saved; if the two groups of men stood glowering at one another for many seconds more the explosion would come.

Hence, for the space of perhaps two minutes Gaston Olaf was the man-driving camp-boss at his best, or worst. He raved and cursed; he pushed and shoved; and he proved the truth of his assertion: He was boss there as well as in his own camp. The men yielded slowly, but they yielded. The sleighs filled, the horses were untied, and with angry, side-long glances at the gunmen the woodsmen started away.

Gaston vented a great sigh of relief and turned around.

"Eh! So you thought I'd turned crooked, did you, young man?" Crowley, haggard and nervous, was holding out his hand. "You thought I had turned crooked, didn't you?"

"I couldn't quite believe it," replied Gaston. "I didn't see how a white man could."

"No, he couldn't. And when I heard how things were up here, and that I'd got the name of a crook, I came up to straighten things out. And now that's done, and now I'm going out again. This camp is spoiled. Thorson, I give you the same advice I gave you in my store at Wolverene—sell out."

Gaston's smile was too grim to need words to supplement it.

"Look at those wolves!" Crowley flung his arm out at the crowd of gun-men. "Hired wolves! Hired by the day to run the camp as the Syndicate wants it run. What's the use, Thorson? You can't fight that kind of thing."

"No," said Gaston quietly, studying the gang, "but I can fight Bradley. All that scum is nothing without him."

"You've been lucky—awful lucky, so far, my boy. You've made friends"—he jerked his head in the direction of Loomis—"and they've helped you. But that's just luck; it can't last. Nothing can last against an outfit like the Syndicate. I'm more than twice as old as you, Thorson, and I've had more than a hundred times as much business experience and I tell you when Big Business goes out after a little fellow, they get him. I never saw it fail yet. If they can't buy you out, they crush you out. Here; I'm going to put it in plain man-talk

Digitized by Google

—they won't think anything of having you killed if they need it in their business."

"I know. I've known it for some time."

"Well, look at that gang of——killers! What chance have you got if they give the order to get you?"

"I don't know," replied Gaston with a finality that there was no mistaking, "but I do know this, Crowley; I am not going to quit before they do get me. You look at it from a business standpoint; I'm different. To tell the truth, I wouldn't care to live after quitting in a fight like this."

"You're a—— of a business man, then," was Crowley's final, disgusted retort. "Now, no thanks go. Get me a rig; I'm through here."

Thorson drove back to Wolverene in company with Walter Loomis. The drive began in silence which was maintained for a mile or more. Gaston was at a loss how to begin to ask the questions that were puzzling him. Finally he blurted:

"You're a Syndicate man, aren't you, Loomis?"

Loomis puffed twice at his cigar before replying.

"Your tenses are wrong," he said. "I was."

"What?"

"I severed my connection with the Syndicate the day I started south to get Crowley. I couldn't hardly pull off a stunt like that and stay on their pay-roll, you know. When I was down below I made a deal with the Chicago crowd. They've been after me for some time. I turned in two claims I had picked up on the side, and they gave me a good deal."

Gaston was looking down at the snow as the cutter sped along, paying no attention to Loomis's words.

"Huh! Why did you do it?" he said.

"Because they gave me a good deal, and——"

"Why did you go after Crowley—to help me? Why did you do it?"

"Why"—Loomis hesitated and smoked awhile. "Why, I heard about the agreement that Bradley had given Crowley."

"Who told you?"

The silence was doubly long this time. So long that Gaston raised his head and looked at Loomis.

"Miss Drake," said the latter.

The cutter slipped on. For a long time there was no sound save the *plup-plup*, *plup-plup* of the horse's hoofs and the faint jingle of the bells on the shafts.

"Miss Drake?" stammered Gaston, and sat dumb.

"Yes," Loomis continued easily after a while. "Manning, at the store, had happened to drop the news while talking with her. She came to me. Then there wasn't anything to do but to go and get Crowley. I had a business interest in finding him, myself. You can't do your best work for a man you don't believe in, can you? Well, I wanted to know about that agreement, and Bradley." He turned toward Gaston. "Ray Drake didn't know about that paper."

"No?" said Gaston carelessly.

"No. Ray is ambitious, and Bradley has pretty near got him hypnotized; but he did not know about that. She'll be glad to hear that."

"Yes. Yes, of course. "Gaston resumed his study of the snow that slipped past the runners. "It was a pretty white thing for you to do, Loomis. I don't quite understand why you did it."

Loomis shrugged his shoulders.

"All right. Let it go at that."

"You'll have Bradley bucking you now."

"Oh, not so it will hurt. The Syndicate doesn't know what the Chicago property amounts to. As soon as we've developed it a little, they'll buy us out."

"At their figure?"

"No. Some of our ledges will yield rock for five years. We could interest the Muggenheims. The Syndicate will pay our price, or we'll call the Muggenheims in."

"You heard the price they offered for our timber, didn't you?" questioned Gaston warningly.

"Yes," drawled Loomis, "but that was different. You see that—that wasn't quite all business."

He laughed as he chirped to the horse, and Gaston looked at him wonderingly. How big a man was Loomis, anyway? And what kind of a man was he. Was he the careless, good-humored boyish fellow, who seemed to take everything just a little too easy? Or was he big enough to hide what he really felt?

"Why did you do it?" repeated Gaston. "I'm nothing to you. You could have found out about Bradley without going to all that trouble. Why did you do it?"

"I did it," said Loomis deliberately, "because Miss Drake wanted me to. I don't

Digitized by Google

know as I care to say anything along that line, Thorson. It's done now and over with. Suppose we let it go at that."

"All right," agreed Gaston, "we'll let it go at that."

At Wolverene he wasted no more time than was necessary to secure another rig to take him out to camp. A variety of emotions were troubling him, and he wished to be alone, out where the grave trees lent counsel, and where he always felt at peace. A shock and a thrill had gone through him as he learned that Ethel Drake had openly shown her interest in him. He remembered the night she had come to warn him at the mill. Why had she done it? How much did she care?

The elation that came with these thoughts was only momentary. The depressing sense of humiliation was the stronger. Twice now Bradley had placed him in a helpless position, and twice he had escaped —how?

"Women," Tom Pine had said," women—!"

And Gaston Olaf swallowed hard and hung his head.

BACK in town Bradley, whose prey had escaped, was anything but despondent. It was he who brought Ethel news of Gaston's release, and to her amazement Bradley seemed glad at the unexpected turn of events.

"Business is business," he said smiling, "and my duty to the directors and stockholders forces me sometimes to do things that are very much against my will, personally. It is my duty to run the store department as efficiently as possible, and it was business to get hold of those goods if we could. Of course it's really a small matter, and I'm glad that this fellow, Thorson, got out of it the way he did."

"But you—you knew of that agreement, Mr. Bradley," stammered the girl in bewilderment. "How could you do—that?"

"Yes." Bradley looked at the floor contritely. "I really was not myself in that matter. No; no, I wasn't myself."

"Why weren't you? What do you mean?" He looked at her steadily.

"Can't you guess?" he said softly. He rose and stood over her. "It was wrong, it was madness; I would have repented it desperately, but I couldn't help it. Do you understand?"

"No," she whispered in amazement.

"Ethel!" he said hoarsely, and held out his hand. It dropped to his side as she shrank from him. "Are you afraid of me?" he said gently.

"Not now," she said, looking at his face. "No, not now."

"Sometimes you are?"

"I—I don't know."

"Try me!" he said. "Some things that I do may seem harsh; but business is business, and these things must be done. But—try me! Can't you understand—can't you see that there's nothing I wouldn't do for you—to make you happy. There," he continued soothingly, "I've said more than I had any right to say. Don't be alarmed. I don't want to distress you; I want to make you happy."

"Do you really?" A light of daring had leaped to her eyes. "Do you really mean that?"

"Try me. Just try me."

"Anything—anything?"

"Yes; anything."

"Then please—please, play fair with Mr. Pine and—Mr. Thorson."

"What!" Bradley recovered himself instantly, and put his smile back in place. "Oh. Well—I promised; so be it."

"You really mean that?"

"Wait and see."

"You will not attempt to—to hurt their business?"

"I will not. The war is over. I'll give orders today. Are you satisfied?"

"I—I can scarcely believe it," she whispered. "It's so generous."

"Nonsense! It's nothing. A few thousand more a year in dividends; what is that, compared to this?"

He reached for her hand again, and this time she let him take it.

"Thank you," he chuckled, and bowed to kiss it, but she drew it away.

"No," she said, "not that, please."

"Nothing—if it doesn't please you," he said gallantly. "Well, are you happier now? Fine! If there's any other little thing you want done, just let me know. You know now that you have only to let me know your wishes."

Ethel spent the remainder of the day in a bewildered state of mind. Was it possible that she had misjudged Bradley so grossly? She had thought of him always as dominant and remorseless. Now he professed to

Digitized by Google

be her willing servant. Was it possible—that she had this influence, that she had made a "good" man out of a man whom she had considered "bad"?

She felt, perhaps, a little throb of vanity at this thought. It was only natural; Bradley was a strong man, a great man, perhaps. What power he had, what a position!

Ethel tossed her head in vexation at her straying thoughts; she wouldn't believe that Mr. Bradley had become "good" until she had proof.

The proof of Bradley's change apparently appeared that evening. Ray Drake came home in a mood of mingled exultation and disappointment.

"It's Mr. Bradley," he said curtly in response to Ethel's demand for the cause of his mood. "I can't understand what's happened to him."

"Have you had trouble with him, Ray?"

"No; no, I should say not; not me," exulted the young man. "On the contrary. Ethel, Bradley's going to make me. I'm going right up among the big ones with him. We had a talk this afternoon; can't let you in on what was said, sis, but—well, I didn't think that Bradley thought quite as much of me as he does. Of course I knew I'd get in on the big money some time, but I didn't suspect it was coming so soon."

"Is that why you can't understand what has happened to Mr. Bradley?" asked Ethel.

"No. Oh, no. Bradley has a genius for picking out good men," said the young man complacently. No; it's something else." He threw up his hands. "Ethel, what d'you suppose he's done? He's given orders at the store to let Thorson & Pine have anything they want on the same terms of credit as obtained with Crowley!"

"Between us," he added while Ethel stood silent with surprise and delight, "I don't think they'll come asking for anything; but it certainly does show that something has happened to bring a big change in Mr. Bradley."

"Why don't you think they will ask for anything, Ray?" asked Ethel.

"Because this fellow Thorson is a tough. He isn't civilized. Civilized men play the game according to the rules. He doesn't. Rather butt his head off against a stone wall than come off his high horse and use sense. No; he's too tough to have decency enough to compromise."

"But surely," protested the girl, "if he sees that Mr. Bradley has become friendly toward him——"

"Which Bradley certainly has, for some reason or other."

"Mr. Thorson will not wish to continue the—the trouble that has been between them."

"Won't he!" sneered Drake. "That just goes to show how little you or any girl can appreciate the character of a rough-neck like Thorson. Why, he's a wild man; he's lived in the woods most of his life; as I said, he isn't civilized. A civilized man would be ready to come in and call it quits. This big tough will sulk around and keep the trouble going."

"I can't believe that," said Ethel firmly.

"Wait and see; just wait and see."

"Does he—or Mr. Pine—do they know of Mr. Bradley's changed attitude?"

"I don't know. I didn't know about it myself until this evening. But it won't make any difference; the old fellow, Pine, might be reasonable; the other fool won't. Well"—he looked significantly at his sister—"Mr. Bradley has proved himself a big, fine man, hasn't he?"

"It seems so," replied Ethel. "Yes, it is fine of him."

XIX

SHE had decided upon her course of action. Since she was responsible for Bradley's change of heart it was obligatory upon her, she felt, to further the good which must result from the conciliatory action. That night she wrote briefly to Gaston:

DEAR MR. THORSON: I have just learned that the Syndicate is ready to do you full justice by dealing with you at the store as Mr. Crowley had planned to deal with you. They are ready to help instead of hinder your business. I thought this such good news that I wished to be the first to break it to you.

Sincerely,
ETHEL DRAKE.

She managed to see that the note went out to the mill in the morning, from where she knew it would be delivered to Gaston the same day. A reply should come to hand the day after; possibly he would come to town in person to make his peace. But the next day came, and the next, and there was no reply, no Gaston, no sign to indicate that her note had been received.

Digitized by Google

During these days Bradley skilfully improved upon the impression he had made. He was to all appearances her willing slave; he accepted, apparently, her wishes above all others; was—if manner and words spoke true—so deeply influenced by her that it was impossible for her to picture him as the remorseless man she had fancied him.

He showed plainly that he was disappointed and hurt by the failure of Thorson & Pine to take notice of his altered attitude.

"And yet I suppose it is to be expected," he said resignedly. "Probably I have shown a harsh front to them. Probably my own fault that I've been misjudged."

He looked at Ethel in a way to indicate that it was she who had made him see the new light. And Ethel looked back, glad and trustful.

On the fourth day after sending the note she met Tom Pine on the street. The old man was walking along rapidly, his eyes on the ground, and when he lifted his head at her greeting she was shocked by the grim expression upon his face.

"Hello, miss! Fine day." Tom was in a hurry and made to pass on.

"I wrote a note the other day to Mr. Thorson," said Ethel boldly. "Do you know if he got it?"

"He got some sort of a letter the other day, I noticed," replied Tom.

His face did not light up as usual at the sight of her, and she missed the merry wrinkles about the twinkling blue eyes. As she observed more closely she saw that the eyes were not twinkling; they were restless and ill at ease, as eyes might be that are constantly on the lookout for danger.

"Yes, I reckon he got it," he said, and hurried on. A few steps away he stopped abruptly and turned. "You staying here through the Winter, miss?"

"Why, yes; certainly. Why?"

"You hadn't oughter," said Tom and went on his way.

"Why?" faltered Ethel, when she recovered herself; but Tom was out of hearing.

She felt that she understood, after she had thought it over. There was danger of more trouble, all because of a miserable misunderstanding, because Gaston and Tom did not know of Bradley's fine action. Because they did not know Bradley's true self.

Ethel's firm little chin became firmer, and a red spot of anger flared in her cheeks. She went promptly to the hotel-stable where Bradley had placed a driver and cutter at her disposal. Twenty minutes later she was snuggled down in the furs of the light sleigh speeding out of town bound for the logging camp.

GASTON was prying loose an ice-bound log when she came driving up. He raised his head suddenly at the sound of the sleigh-bells, and for the second time that day she was shocked by change that a few days had wrought in a countenance. Gaston's face was as hard as the steel-blue ice on the frozen logging road. His mouth was set in the same grim line at Tom Pine's; his eyes were restless with the same expression of painful alertness. He did not smile at the sight of her. He stood looking at her without a word, without change of expression, for several seconds. Then he threw down his peavy and came striding toward her.

There was no greeting between them; he was obviously in no mood for trifling conventionalities; and Ethel was so disturbed by the change in him that the ordinary words would not come.

"What is it?" he said bluntly; but at the sight of the distress that sprang to her eyes his voice softened though his expression did not change. "Won't you drive to MacLean's office, where it's warm?"

"No," she said swiftly. "I'm not cold, really. "I—I wanted to know if you got a certain note I wrote you?"

"Yes," he said.

There was an uncomfortable silence. Ethel broke out hurriedly after a while:

"You paid no attention to it. That wasn't right. You know it wasn't right. Mr. Bradley wants to end the—trouble between you. You read the note didn't you? It was plain enough. The Syndicate store is ready to deal with you the same as Mr. Crowley did, and it's wrong of you, Mr. Thorson, it's wicked of you, not to come in and—and make up—as Mr. Bradley wishes to do."

He looked at her; an amazed smile showed for an instant in the corners of his mouth.

"Mr. Bradley—wishes to make up?" His tone was lighter, which relieved her, though it puzzled her. "Then, verily, the leopard can change his spots, and the lion lie down with the lamb without taking a meal of mutton!"

Digitized by Google

The lightness vanished, and his face was hard again.

"Miss Drake, I am sorry that you had the trouble of driving out here to bring such a message. It was a waste of time, though I thank you for it."

"You are still angry, I see," she went on. "Mr. Bradley said you would be, and so did Ray. But won't you believe me when I tell you that it is so, and that the Syndicate, and Mr. Bradley are friendly to you, and that they will let you and Mr. Pine run your business undisturbed?"

"Let us?" said Gaston softly, and his tone was as cold as the wind that swept the frozen snow. "How very kind of them!"

"Well, perhaps that isn't a fortunate way of putting it. But they aren't going to trouble you any more. There won't be anything now to interfere with your success. Is it a waste of time to bring you such a message?"

"What is the source of the message?"

"Mr. Bradley himself. I have his word for it."

"Hm," said Gaston. "His word, eh?"

"Oh, you don't know Mr. Bradley, you really don't Mr. Thorson. I thought the same as you think of him, but I changed my mind when I came to know him, really know him. If you could hear him talk about his new attitude toward you I'm sure you would change your feeling toward him too."

The swift, piercing look that he gave her, stopped the rest of her speech.

"Bradley's been talking, has he?" he said. "You've changed your opinion of him have you?"

"Yes. You would, too, if you only knew him as he really is."

"Yes? And when did you begin to change your opinion of him?"

"From the day on which you were cleared in court. He came then and told me that he was glad you were freed. Oh, he explained all about that agreement. He explained everything; and now he wants to drop this stupid quarrel. It is stupid, you know, Mr. Thorson, if you persist in carrying it on. You're only fighting for the success of your lumber business, aren't you? Well, now that you have your old standing back at the store your success is assured. You've got what you've fought for; and so there is no reason for your continuing the quarrel."

"Bradley admitted to you that he tried to railroad me by salting that agreement did he?"

"Yes; frankly. He explained how he regretted that action; he explained everything."

"By George!" cried Gaston in admiration. "He must be considerable explainer, Miss Drake. Now I'll bet if I'd held out a paper like that I'd never be able to explain it away to you."

"You would never do such a thing," she retorted simply."

"No; I suppose I wouldn't. I never had any practise. And when a man does a thing like that to me once——"

"You can forgive him can't you? If he's big enough to admit his error and make full reparation?"

Gaston looked at her quietly.

"No," he said.

"Oh! Then you won't pay any attention to me? You're going to keep this silly quarrel up?"

"To the finish."

His curtness froze her.

"Oh! how you've changed!" she cried.

"Changed?" he laughed bitterly. "Well, I should hope so. I've been in jail; I've been in the sheriff's hands. I've been helpless, at the mercy of my enemy, and I'm free now simply because of—a woman. Changed? Why, Miss Drake my head is hanging and my feet drag for the first time in my life. Don't you understand? Bradley's licked me; he put me where I had to have help from a woman—from you. And that's why the quarrel is going on, Miss Drake; that's why there won't be any trading by Thorson & Pine at the Syndicate store. Bradley is boss-man at present. There'll be no end of the quarrel until that is changed."

"I don't understand that."

"I didn't think you would."

"My brother Ray said something that I didn't believe—he said that you were—rough. He said you were—tough, and wouldn't obey the rules of the game—of business. I didn't believe it—then," she concluded hesitatingly.

"And now you do?"

"I don't want to believe it."

Gaston shrugged his broad shoulders.

"A man is what he is. Perhaps your brother was right. Perhaps you haven't known the real me, just as you say you didn't know the 'real' Bradley."

Digitized by Google

She looked at him a long time, seeking the real him, and failing.

"Oh, but you're harsh," she broke out impetuously. "Just as harsh as the ice and snow and wind of this North." She shivered. "I don't believe I'm going to like your North, after all. Why, don't you show me your real self?"

"I will," he said seriously, "after this row is settled."

"Then you're going on with it?"

"To the finish," he repeated. "After that I will be my real self."

There was only one thing left for her to say and she said it sharply—

"Good-by!"

"No," he said, "not good-by; just 'so long.' I'm going to see you again, you know, when I can be my real self. And so it's only—so long!"

He stood—without moving—until the cutter had disappeared down the road. Then he looked about as if seeking some one to share his amazement with, scratched his chin, and exploded—

"Well! I will be darned!"

Having rid himself of this fulmination he shook his head, laughed a little, swore promptly at his levity, and resumed his study of the road where Ethel Drake had disappeared,

"Bradley, by gad!" he muttered finally, "I didn't think you were that slick. No sir, I didn't do you justice. You—hypnotist. Yessir; that's what it is; he's got her hypnotized almost as badly as he's got the brother. Bradley's made her believe that he's fairly dripping brotherly love—and he and his bad men are getting ready to spill hell all over the district!"

XX

IT WAS true. The tentacles of the Syndicate were reaching for a death-grip on Wolverene. In the gang of thugs which had faced the lumber-jacks at Pottsville had appeared the first warning that the usual system of the mining octopus was to be used again. As a result Wolverene changed within a week from the most optimistic of mining-camps, ready to buy and celebrate claims with the slightest show of color in the rock, to a camp of worry and suspicion, where men grew silent and hard-eyed at the advent of a stranger, and where only the strongest retained faith in the camp's future.

The rosy optimism which makes a new mining-camp a place where the coldest blood grows warm and confident, drooped and disappeared. The Wolverenites knew the ways and records of big money. Not a mining district from Dawson to Nicaragua, from the Rand to the Rockies, where capital had crushed and robbed small investors and prospectors, but what had its representative in this camp.

"It's the Nome freeze-out over again," said a shaggy Alaskan, shrugging his shoulders. "I bucked 'em then and they friz me cold. I'm older now. I'm going to sell and go out."

"Hell's fire and six-bits!" protested his partner. "Nobody ain't buying. If you sell now you gotta darn near give it away."

"Half a quart is better'n no licker a' tall," was the reply. "I can read signs when they're shoved plumb up aaginst my naked eye. I'm for selling and trav'ling."

There were many others of similar frame of mind. A few days before the arrival of the Syndicate thugs, a bell-boy at the hotel had sold for twenty-five thousand dollars a claim he had never seen, to a speculator who had never left the hotel. A week after the gang arrived in the district the investor used the deed to call a hundred-dollar bet in the stud game out at Manchester Jimmy's.

"Nobody's buying claims," quoth the caller, "and I'm no miner."

He lost the bet and removed his hat as the deed was drawn in by his opponent.

"Fare thee well, little one; I don't believe you're any good nohow."

The bad men did not make themselves conspicuous. The time, apparently, had not arrived for that. They merely scattered themselves over the district so thoroughly and quietly that no one knew who was or was not a Syndicate man. The more cautious element in camp recognized this condition but kept their mouths closed concerning it. The hotheads resented it and made no effort to keep their resentment a secret. As a result there was a gradual diminishment of the numbers of such hotheads in the camp.

While the elimination of such as the Syndicate deemed undesirable progressed in various fashions, means had been taken to prevent the ingress of others. In fact, there was for a time a complete cessation of new arrivals. The word had gone out that Wolverene was a camp to avoid, and this

Digitized by Google

had the effect of halting many who had contemplated visits to the Northern gold-field. Those who persisted in coming North in spite of warnings found the Winter trail terribly hard and discouraging.

Bradley's men infested the trail; there was no transportation northward except for Syndicate men, and the unwary Argonaut who, after many vicissitudes finally found himself at Frost Bite Landing, was told that Wolverene was starving, that the camp was being ravaged by smallpox, and that no one might go beyond. Yet all this was done so smoothly, all was apparently the work of individuals, that in no way was the hand of the Syndicate apparent.

The great company, however, was not having all its own way. Just as secretly as its gang was conducting the operation of crushing the individuals so the individuals were preparing to fight.

Gaston Olaf and Loomis were the leaders of this movement. Bradley had gone cold with rage when Loomis appeared as field-manager of the Chicago mines properties. He had made no offer to purchase the mines, but his agents had begun to acquire claims adjacent to the Chicago outfit; he had prepared a campaign of strangulation to crush Loomis and the men who had engaged him.

But now the latent qualities in Loomis, which had been hidden under his good-humor, came to the surface, and the Chicago crowd began to fight back in a way that made Bradley smile in appreciation. It was easier for Loomis to buy from disheartened claim-owners than it was for the Syndicate agents, whom the owners feared and hated, and he made the most of this opportunity.

"But one man, or one company, can't buck that organization and have a show," he said to Gaston. He had come to the logging-camp at night for a conference. "If we can't get an organization of our own we're going to lose. It's all the rest of the camp against the Syndicate, and they're the stronger at that. If we're going to put up a fight we've got to get together."

Soon after this it became apparent that the district was divided into two camps, and by the determined quiet that prevailed in each camp it became obvious that a clash was inevitable.

One day Ethel Drake, returning home in the middle of the forenoon after snow-shoe practise, found Ray waiting for her.

"What? The busy man home so early?" she laughed. "Business must be slack to spare you, Ray."

"Ha, ha! Yes, it is," responded Ray nervously. "Fact is it's so slack that I've got a vacation."

"A vacation? Well, Winter-time in Wolverene is my idea of no time and place to have a vacation."

"Mine neither. But, well, you see, it isn't entirely a vacation, sis. You see there's a lot of reports to be taken to the home office, and a lot of things like that——"

"Have the mails stopped?"

"Oh, no. Things have got a little tangled, that's all. A few things in the reports have been misunderstood. Then we've had a new survey made and that's got to be shown and explained at the next director's meeting which is in about two weeks, and—well, I'm being sent out to do the job."

"Why, I thought Mr. Bradley always did that. You told me yourself weeks ago that you expected him to go out for the meeting."

"Yes, but he's found that he can't go. A lot of new claims being opened, and he can't leave," he added hurriedly. "So I'm elected, sis, to make the big trip to New York, and you'll be shopping on Fifth Avenue within two weeks!"

As Ethel made no response he continued: "Of course I couldn't leave you here alone, sis, and besides you wouldn't want to be left; wouldn't want to miss the chance to see New York, eh?"

"No," she said, "I wouldn't want to be left, but—but——"

"But what?" he demanded, eying her closely. "Any reason why you should not go?"

"No." She had suddenly recalled Tom Pine's saying that she 'hadn't oughter stay' in Wolverene and wondered if this had any connection with that. "No!" Memories of Fifth Avenue, of New York, the earthly paradise of womankind flashed before her. "When do we leave?"

"Today, on a sleigh that goes out at four o'clock."

"Oh! So soon. Why couldn't you let me know before?"

"Didn't know it myself until a few minutes ago. Bradley just decided he couldn't go himself. Better start in and get ready, sis; I won't be home for lunch; have to

Digitized by Google

turn the store over to Manning, and so on. You'll be ready when the sleigh comes around? Glad you're going?"

"Yes," she said a little doubtfully, "but it does seem sudden."

She began to pack at once, and when the packing was done she realized that she could not leave without trying to understand more of the matter. She would not go out to the camp, no, she wouldn't, after the way Gaston had treated her message of Bradley's peacemaking. But there was Tom Pine out at the sawmill. And thither she had herself driven immediately after noon.

A gleam of relief crossed Tom's hardened old face as he heard the news.

"Going out, eh? That's good." He smiled paternally. "She's a hard one, this country is, on folks the first Winter, miss, and I'm glad you ain't going to stick her through all the white weather."

"Yes, you said I ought not to stay," retorted Ethel. "Was that what you meant?"

"Pree-zactly, miss, pree-zactly," lied Tom glibly. He chuckled a little. "Cold feet is kind of a epidemic here in cold weather, miss, and they's a lot of people fell victims to it who's going out. Not that you're in any danger of contracting that disease, miss; it don't hit people with your kind of eyes. But you'll come back when the weather softens and by that time things will be different, miss, let us hope."

"Mr. Pine," she said resolutely, "why does Mr. Thorson persist in being unfriendly toward Mr. Bradley when Mr. Bradley is friendly toward him?"

Tom looked away and coughed drily.

"He's kind of a stubborn guy, that partner of mine, miss; he's got to be shown. But don't you worry about that, miss; he won't hurt the Syndicate unless he has to."

His wink and expression were irresistible and Ethel laughed.

"Evidently you're not at all afraid that he might get hurt?" she said.

"Who, Gaston Olaf? Shucks, miss, he ain't the kind that gets hurt, and if he does it don't hurt him like it does some kinds. He's one of the kind with the sand in his eyes. Ever hear of that, miss. An old Injun told it to me once, way down on the old Wiscons', back in the old days: You see, miss, in the beginning there wasn't any men on this old world, only bears about forty-foot long, and ugly buffalo that weighed about ten ton, and wolves that could gobble the buffalo at one bite and snakes that took forty wolves to a square meal, and things like that.

"Well, one day the Great Spirit happened to take a look at the world and he didn't like it, because you see, miss, these animals was nothing but a lot of bad spirits in different forms. So the Great Spirit laid himself out to put these bad spirits on the bum, and he made man.

" 'Man,' says he, 'I've made you as near like Myself as it's good for you to be; now get on the job and put those bad spirits out of business.'

"So he watched them a while—couple million years or so, you know, miss—and he see that some of his men were doing fine and overcoming the bad spirits for further orders, and some were lazy and scared. So He got kind of sore and he gets 'em all in a line, the Great Spirit did, and he says—

" 'Stand up there and open your eyes wide.'

"Then before they knew what was coming he fired a whole handful of sand right smack in their eyes. Well, that hurt a lot you know, miss, and some of 'em cried, and their tears washed all the sand out of 'em; but some of 'em didn't cry, but just stood there and took it without a wink, and the sand stayed in them, then and ever since. Yessiree—miss, I mean. And the one that started Gaston Olaf's tribe, miss, he was one of those who didn't cry, and the sand stayed in his breed forever an' ever.

"No; you can hurt that kind all right, miss, but you can't take his sand away, and as long as a man's got that, miss, he's a man, and nothing else matters."

Ethel drove back to town in a troubled frame of mind. She had come in contact with the hard masculine creed of the North, first in Gaston out at the camp, now in Tom Pine. It chilled her a little, as a gust of arctic wind roaring into a drawing-room might chill one. It was foreign to her world. Her world was the world of the feminine: Fifth Avenue, the shops and the gowns, the security and assured comforts of civilization. And yet—she breathed rapidly and blushed.

A thrill, but of another kind, came to her as Walter Loomis appeared to see her off. He bore on his arm a fur coat of surpassing warmth.

Digitized by Google

"Too heavy for me to use tramping around," he said, "but just the thing for driving. You won't object to my loaning it to Ethel, Ray, even if you and I have split?"

"Not if she cares to accept it," replied Drake coldly.

"But, Wally, it would be robbing you," protested Ethel.

"Try it on," he laughed. "Ah, fine! Some fit!—when you roll up those sleeves."

He watched them drive away with less regret than he had expected. She was wearing his coat, which would remind her of him for a while, at least. What hurt was that Bradley, on his big bay, was seeing them a piece down the road.

"So he's clearing his decks, is he?" said Gaston Olaf when Tom Pine brought the news of Ethel's departure. "He's sent her out of the way so she won't see the mess; he expects to have us all cleaned up before she comes back. He'll be starting some rough stuff pretty soon. Well, let it come!"

XXI

IT CAME. With a suddenness for which even the long Winter weeks of growing tension had been no preparation, Bradley struck. It was on the coldest night of the year that Gaston Olaf was awakened in the darkness of 3 A.M. by the sleepy cookee.

"I—I guess you ought to get up, boss," stammered the boy, holding his lantern up to Gaston's bunk. "I guess you ought to take a look to south of camp."

"What for?"

"Well—well. I seen it first when I got up, just now, and I thought at first it was only Wolverene town, and I wasn't going to wake nobody; but then I keep lookin' and I see it was too far east for Wolverene, 'way too far east, and—and so I thought, 'I guess the boss had better get up and see!'"

Gaston's sock-covered feet thudded on the floor as he leaped from his bunk. No need for him to rub the sleep from his eyes. A warning sense had whispered the news which the boy was afraid to utter, and with a leap he was at the door and looking out.

The wicked red glow that daubed the black sky far to the southward told its grim story to him in the space of two winks.

"The mill!" he cried. "Good God!"

"I figgered it was," whimpered the boy, "it's too far east to be the town, and there ain't anything else over there big enough to make a blaze like that."

"The mill—Tom—!" For a flash Gaston was badly flustered, but only for a flash. "Cookee! Jump for the stable while I'm dressing. I want my horse and cutter. Jump now!"

He was dressed and out again ere the horse had been led out, and he hurried the beast between the shafts, hooked up the harness, and threw himself in and drove off in a fury.

"Tom. Old Tom." That was the burden of his thoughts as he flogged the horse over the frozen road. The mill scarcely entered his mind. "It might have caught him in his sleep. He's getting old. It might have caught him in his sleep."

He drove with no thought for the horse or for himself, pounding the beast when it threatened to slacken, and paying no attention to the fact that his fur coat was unbuttoned.

"Faster, faster!"

The red glow lost its dullness and became more red, more alive, more sinister.

"Faster, faster!"

The shape of flames flaring crazily over the timber-tops became apparent.

"It's the mill for sure, and the lumber is burning, too," spoke Gaston aloud. "And Tom's little shanty—Get up! *darn* you, get up!"

An explosion roared out in the blackness of night, and the flames spurted high toward the starless zenith. Another explosion, and another; and after a while the flames began to die down.

"Dynamite," whispered Gaston as he sped. "Dynamite in the fire."

Out of the black forest into the red space about what had once been the sawmill he came driving like a man beset. Black figures ran uselessly to and fro, silhouetted against the dying flames. Uselessly, for the fire had done its work too swiftly, too thoroughly for man to have a chance to perform the work of salvage. The mill was a great heap of grotesque glows; the lumber piles were going up in flames; the outbuildings, including Tom Pine's shanty were burned to the snow.

"Tom Pine!" bellowed Gaston, throwing himself from the cutter. "Where's Tom?"

"He's all right," replied a man.

Digitized by Google

"All right. What do you mean by all right? Where is he?"

"Why, he was here just a minute ago. —! Where's he gone. Hey, boys; pass the word about for Tom."

The word was passed but no Tom appeared.

"Don't lie to me," growled Gaston, glaring about him. "If he's in there"—he nodded toward the burned shanty—"say so and have it over with."

"No, no! He's all right. Hey; any one seen old Tom?"

An answer came this time, from a man who had just come up the road from town.

"Why, sure, I just see him a minute ago. Met him in the road. He had his old gun. Said there was no use sticking here and he was going to put his rifle in a safe place."

"How did it start, anybody know?" demanded Gaston of the head sawyer.

"Only God, or the devil, and they ain't neither of 'em telling, I guess," was the reply. "First thing was an explosion in the engine-room. Wallace, here, came near getting his'n."

"I was sleeping sound, with about fifteen pounds of steam on to keep 'er simmering through the night," added the engineer. "The first I knew was, *bung!* and I run for the engine-room. The whole —— thing was wrecked, except the boiler. It wasn't in the boiler, boss, that the explosion started. And then the fire came."

"And at the same time it flashed out in the saw-room floor, and another explosion blew the carriages all to ——," continued the sawyer. "And then there was fire all over the place, lumber piles, dust dump—the whole thing just lit up like it was primed and ready."

"Which it was," swore the engineer. "Oil and dynamite. I know 'em when I see 'em and hear 'em and smell 'em at work."

"Everybody get out all right?" asked Gaston, calmly.

"Night fireman blown all to ——," came the engineer's reply. "But he was a whisky soak and nobody'll miss him. Couple of the other boys got kind o' well browned, but they'll come right in time."

"And Tom wasn't touched?"

"No; though the way his shanty went up there was oil on that, too."

"Oil! What are you talking about?" laughed Gaston. "And 'dynamite.' You're dreaming. Don't dish out any loose talk like that."

"No? All right, boss. But then you'd better get after Tom, too, because of all the language that I've heard a man rid himself of, old Tommy poured out the burningest when he saw what a job had been done."

"He said"—it was the sawyer taking up the engineer's words—"that the devil who'd done that trick was named Brad——"

"Hold on!" roared Gaston. "Stop right there. Keep names off your tongue until this thing has been investigated."

"All right, boss," agreed the man. "But if you'd heard Tom conversing you wouldn't think there was anything secret about that name. Tom didn't care who heard him yell it."

"When Tom comes back tell him to hunt me up," said Thorson. "I'll be around somewhere."

He made as close an inspection of the ruins as the heat would permit and saw that the mill and its machinery was a complete loss, and along with it the lumber. It was a clean sweep for the flames, and the explosions had hopelessly wrecked the machinery.

"Wiped out," he said. "Thorson & Pine make no more lumber this Winter. Score one, for Bradley."

He seated himself on a stump beyond the circle of light and buttoned his coat about him. Already he had felt and conquered the whirlwind of rage which had cried for revenge. He even smiled as he noted how he put his anger away from him.

"Business certainly is making a pussy-footer out of me," he chuckled. "Now, Tom—I wonder how Tom——?"

He stopped, with his mouth half open. How had Tom taken it? What thoughts had flashed in that hard old head; what impulses had ruled the fierce old heart. Man of the open trails was Tom; a man with a primitive code.

"By the eternal pines!" cried Gaston springing up. "Going down the road with his old rifle—toward town—toward Bradley!"

He was back among the men in a few long leaps. Tom had not returned. Into the cutter then, and once more cruelly flogging the over-driven horse. Out of the mill-clearing, out of the light of the flame, through the jack-pine, and finally out into the dead main street of Wolverene, all at a gallop. Straight to the hotel where Bradley

Digitized by Google

lived he drove. He reached the door with a fear of what he would see inside, of the excited, horror-stricken crowd, of old Tom, of all the rest.

To his intense relief not a soul was visible about the door; only the light of a single oil-lamp saved the lobby from being dead. The night clerk, waking grumpily at Gaston's knock, replied curtly that Mr. Bradley was in his room, yes; that Mr. Pine was not in the hotel; that nobody had entered within three hours."

"Anything else you want to know?" he sneered sleepily.

"No," gasped Gaston gratefully, "no, my boy, that's a lot."

He placed his trembling horse in the hotel livery-stable, tipping extravagantly for immediate currying, blanketing, and oats.

"Now," he mused, hurrying back to the dark, dead street, "there's some fancy trailing to be done before daylight."

The town began to wake. Lights shone in the restaurants and boarding-houses. Fresh smoke rose from the tin chimneys; a door opened occasionally, and the smell of cooking came out upon the bitter morning air. Men began to appear on the streets. Miners went and came from the mines. At the hotel there was the clatter of breakfast. Presently the sun came peering listlessly over the ice-gray horizon and lighted the street with its cheerless gleams.

A man with his cap down over his eyes, his eyes little more than a pair of slits in a bleak face, his hands in the pockets of his ulster came out of the hotel. He looked to the left and right. He looked across the street, searching the entrances of the stores, even glancing up at the windows of the buildings that boasted a second story. Directly across from the hotel was an open lot, and a way beyond this lot lay a snow-covered pile of logs. It did not escape the attention of the man on the hotel steps. His slit-like eyes rested upon it, found nothing to disturb him there and passed on. The man lounged out and took up a position to one side of the door.

Another man followed him, another one with his cap down over his eyes, his hands in his outer pockets, his face hard and grim. He repeated the scrutiny which the first had bestowed upon the scene. Having satisfied himself he lounged down and took up a position at the side of the door.

There was a moment's pause, while the two men stood on guard, their eyes alert, their hands ready in their pockets. Then a fur-gloved hand swiftly thrust open the door; and as Bradley stepped out into the dull sunlight, Tom Pine, out behind the pile of logs, stopped suddenly the little warchant he was humming. Slowly and steadily he raised his rifle.

"Bradley, you ——!"

And then a huge hand fell on the upraised hammer of the rifle, while another effectively closed Tom's mouth against outcry.

Gaston Olaf tore the gun from his partner's hands and flung it into the snow.

"No, you don't, Tom Pine," he whispered. "No, you don't. Bradley belongs to me!"

TO BE CONCLUDED

Digitized by Google

THE BURDEN OF HATE

by Octavus Roy Cohen

Author of "The Fight," "To Escape," etc.

THE heart of Andrew Dougall nourished two great passions, the more consuming of which was a hatred of Steven Ballentyne. The other passion was a fear of the law—but that was a rather trivial matter when weighed in the balance with his bitterness against his only white neighbor. And so when the door slammed suddenly open, letting in a single mad swirl of the storm, and Steven stepped into the cabin, Andrew rose to his six feet of height and the huge muscles of his massive frame bulged expectantly.

It was indeed a fine night for a play of human passion; a night of howling wind, and of straight pines which bent like reeds before it; of driving rain which beat viciously against the weather boarding of the rude cabin; of flashing, blinding lightning and of thunder which reverberated until it seemed that the very floor of the earth rocked with the impact.

Steven stood in the doorway and stared at his enemy. Andrew remained motionless by the table. Eyes were fixed on eyes, and Andrew knew that a great hour had come. He did not speak, but as a peal of thunder shook the cabin, he teetered slightly on the balls of his feet, and they shuffled a bit on the floor.

There was hate supreme in the glance which passed between the giants: an ill-born hatred which had fattened upon its own unhealthy self through years—a hate unnatural and somewhat bestial; a hate representative of the lowest in man.

Their enmity had started from a mere nothing, an ill-considered remark, a warmer one in answer, a blow, a fight. Then a bitter waiting in arms for all these years until the quarrel seemed to have degenerated into a state of mutual moral siege. They had met often yet the crisis had never been precipitated, but each knew that it was there; coiled like a venomous rattler, ready to strike either, or both.

Such a hatred could not have flourished under ordinary surroundings, but the surroundings of the two men were not ordinary. There are desolate tracts in South Carolina's swamp country; but none more desolate than that of which Andrew Dougall and Steven Ballentyne were the only two white inhabitants; they and Steven's young wife.

For miles about their cabins lay trackless swampland, presided over by buzzards and infested with frogs and mosquitoes and snakes and a few hoarse-voiced owls. Steven lived there because he was employed by the timber corporation which owned all the trees for miles about and because the timber corporation required some one on the spot to see that trespassers did not cut and carry away the young developing timber. Steven Ballentyne lived on in his cabin and waited for the cutting he had long ceased to expect, seeing the things that had become so common he had long since failed to see; listening to a frog-croaked silence—and never entertaining the thought of deserting his post as a less conscientious man might well have done without the slightest fear of discovery. No one visited that section of the swamp.

Digitized by Google

As for Andrew Dougall, he lived in the heart of the swamp because it was trackless, deserted, because even the long arm of the law would not reach him there.

Andrew Dougall had committed manslaughter. He had killed a man. And Andrew had a terror of the law and of statutory justice. He was afraid. He had refused in the beginning to give himself up and stand trial, because in so doing he would have risked a year or so in the grim, gray jail at Columbia. Andrew knew that twelve months there would kill him.

He could have left that section of the country, but he did not. There was a reason. In the country there were but two men who knew he had done the killing. One of these men was the doctor who owned the little infirmary in the tiny town on the edge of the swamp. The other man was Steven Ballentyne.

These two men had witnessed the quarrel and these two men knew that he who had been found mysteriously slain had been done to death by Andrew Dougall. That is, Steven knew that; the doctor merely knew that the slayer had been a big man, broad of shoulder and sandy of hair, and that a long and vivid scar across his right temple was a mark not easily forgotten. Andrew knew that if the doctor again saw that scar the man who owned it would face arrest, for the doctor was a conscientious citizen.

Knowledge that Steven possessed the whole of his secret had served to perpetually fan the flame of Andrew's hatred when it might have rotted to death in the fetidness of the swamp. There was always a chance that the doctor might leave—rumors to that effect had caused Andrew to wait and wait, hoping against hope.

On his part Steven had let it be known that the secret remained his. On two or three occasions he had taunted Andrew:

"I could tell a few things which would make people talk, my good Andrew. I could give that doctor a name which would cause excitement."

Then he would chuckle and ride on, conscious of the fact that he had walked the path of danger, conscious, and exultant.

THEY faced each other while the cabin trembled in the grip of the semi-tropical storm. Andrew, by nature a silent man, waited for Steven to speak. And when Steven spoke Andrew gasped with sheer surprise.

"Andrew, my wife is very sick. She is going to have a baby. There are complications. We must get her to town."

The slow mind of the other could not grasp it all at first, and when he did he flushed and breathed deeply. He still retained the feeling that the hour of accounting had come to them. He wasted no words in idle speech.

"It is a bad night, Steven."

"A very bad night."

"And the distance is long."

"Seven miles and more."

"The road must be washed away."

"It is. And my horse is lame."

"We would have to walk?"

"Aye. And carry a stretcher. But we can get there by mornin', with care; and that will no doot save her life."

Andrew secured a flask of whisky from a rude cupboard. This he uncorked and extended toward the other.

"Drink, mon; ye'll be needing it."

Then, when Steven seemed to hesitate, his face flushed darkly.

"This'll be makin' noo diff'runce between us. It is not you I am doing it for."

Steven drank deeply.

They did not speak again as Andrew made ready to face the night. At length Steven flung open the door and they plunged into the storm for the walk to Ballentyne's cabin where the ill woman lay. Their feet became entangled in jutting roots, the rain beat into their clothes and through to their skins. Once Andrew volunteered:

"Mon! Mon! Unless she is awfu' sick this is a bad night."

Steven answered:

"Do ye think if 'twere not life and death I would have come to you?"

They reached the cabin and Andrew spoke with gruff gentleness to the desperately ill woman. She smiled wanly, and he turned away abruptly. His eyes lighted with admiration as they rested on the ingenious stretcher which Steven had constructed as shelter against the storm.

It was strongly built and very heavy, builded of rope and limber saplings and carefully oiled tarpaulin. At each end two smooth handles jutted out for the powerful hands of the big men, and four web straps, two at each end, were designed to throw much of the heavy weight on the shoulders of the bearers. Each strap was looped at

Digitized by Google

the end, and at the places where it was designed to bear on the shoulders, heavy pads, made from saddle-blankets, had been cunningly cut and sewed on laboriously.

The stretcher was heavy as it stood; with an added weight of perhaps a hundred and thirty pounds, its transportation presented a task to try the strength of supermen.

Andrew stood silently in the corner as Steven made his wife ready for the dangerous journey. He stood alone, more alone than he had ever been in his lonesome life.

He marveled at the infinite tenderness of Steven Ballentyne, Steven the rough, the uncouth, the loud-mouthed, the heavy-fisted. He saw this man transformed into a being of gentleness, with soft, soothing fingers and brave, quiet words.

For her part, the woman did her bit; bearing her agony as quietly as possible and facing, with a half-smile, the long, dark road before her—the road through the swamp—and the darker road beyond that, the road which leads to the gates of the Beyond where new lives are found.

To both men that journey was a phantasmagoria of horror. The road was, at best, no road. After days of pelting, driving rain it had become a slimy, tortuous, treacherous thing of reptilian qualities. And while they felt the spur of haste, they dared take no chances lest they fall and their precious burden die.

She lay quietly in her stretcher, which swung jerkily on the straps suspended from the two pairs of magnificent shoulders; uttering no cry—none, at least, piercing enough to be audible above the roar of the storm. Occasionally they set the stretcher down and took advantage of the moment's respite to massage a semblance of circulation into their numbed arms and burning shoulders, for the straps, however cleverly designed to relieve the burden on the arms, cut and seared through the padding.

Each time they paused Steven spoke bravely to his wife, making sure that thus far the elements had been kept away from the body of her who carried a new life beneath her heart. Then it was up again, and on, and on, arms fairly tearing from the shoulder sockets, backs shrieking with torture at the strain of the shoulder-straps.

They followed the trail by instinct. The darkness was impenetrable, save when vividly lighted by the jagged flashes from the heavens, flashes which served only to make the ensuing blackness more velvety than ever. Every once in a while, there came to the ears of the struggling men the rending crash of some huge tree as it spilt, toppled, and floundered to the ground like a prehistoric monster in the death-throes.

ONE mile they staggered, then another and another. The burden became a thing of terror; a dead weight which increased in qualities of exhaustion in inverse ratio to the distance yet remaining to be traveled. It pulled at their arms until those members were dead to feeling; the shoulder-straps cut and burned and pulled on flesh of shoulder and back.

The agony of it was almost unbearable. Yet they staggered along bravely; now carrying the entire burden in their hands, now allowing its whole weight to swing on the straps from their shoulders; now dividing the weight between the two. Their teeth were set and the sweat poured from their tense, mask-like faces.

Fallen trees met them suddenly in the darkness, rising up mockingly and striking them; necessitating long and dangerous detours from the trail. Another mile was passed; three torturous hours were gone.

Andrew's mind had ceased to function, his body moved of its own volition, mechanically, more than by any spur of brain. But the mind of the husband was torturingly alive. He suffered the physical pangs of arm and of shoulder which Andrew suffered, and in addition to that he suffered with his wife. More; he knew Andrew's terror of the town and the doctor who would greet them at the end of their journey.

Steven realized that by this journey Andrew was abandoning himself to the law. He knew the doctor well, and he knew the code which guided the doctor's spiritual and civic life. Barring a miracle, that doctor would recognize Andrew as the assailant in the unsolved killing which had rocked the little town some three years before.

Steven had seen to it that the doctor had never forgotten the incident. He had taken a Machiavellian delight in discussing the case in detail and then recounting it all to Andrew in vitriolic sentences.

Of course, there was the human chance that the doctor would not recognize Andrew, but Steven knew that it was the barest sort of chance. The woman in the storm-beaten litter would mean to him merely

Digitized by Google

another maternity case. The big man with the scar—he was something aside from the routine of life, he was the person, of whom that doctor had been thinking for three years. Steven knew, too, that Andrew realized he was facing certain arrest and almost as certain conviction.

Yet he had made no demur. He had not flinched from the ordeal. Hatred died in the heart of Steven Ballentyne.

He wondered why he had never before recognized the magnificent moral qualities of the man who tramped and sloshed at the head of the stretcher, choking to silence the agony of back and shoulders and arms. Then Steven knew that he had recognized the sterling qualities of the man, else he would not have sought his aid this night.

They battled on through the storm. Five miles had been covered, a half mile, another half. One more mile to go. They groaned as they rested the litter on its adjustable stand, and Steven's eyes softened pityingly as he heard Andrew groan with the sheer agony of it.

Steven, slightly more powerful than the other man, and actuated by a keener personal emotion, started toward his enemy, to find him reeling around in the blackness, half-crazed by the torture he had undergone. He pounded Andrew on the back with a hamlike fist and forced a deep draft of raw whisky between his lips. Andrew shuddered, pulled himself together and stared stupidly at Steven.

"You?" he muttered blankly, and then—

"O-o-o-h! God—my arms—my shoulders!"

"Here."

For the moment Steven forgot himself. He caught Andrew's wrist in a powerful grip and pumped at the numbed arms. Dougall bit back a cry of pain; the very restoration of circulation made his suffering more acute. Steven spoke very softly:

"Only about one mile more, Andrew. Only another mile, Andrew, mon——"

A LIGHT flickered uncertainly in the chart alcove of the little infirmary which was set back from the main street of the small town. The nurse on duty stared shiveringly into the night, pallid with fear. Down the hall the only two patients cried deliriously.

One of them rang impatiently a half-dozen times. The little nurse ran to the patient and welcomed the fretful, frightened scolding. Then she returned to her vigil at the window of the chart alcove.

A flash of lightning, more blinding than its predecessors, and followed by a clap of thunder which shook the modest frame building, brought her up standing; every muscle taut, every nerve quivering. Her lower jaw sagged; she stared from the window. She saw the strange, ghastly thing turn in at the gate, two unhuman, staggering forms, swaying now this way, now that, while between them a stretcher covered with tarpaulin swung drunkenly on four webbed shoulder-straps. The nurse fled hysterically to waken the doctor.

They reached the veranda door. They found on the veranda a weather-stained litter, splashed with mud and covered with bits of twigs broken from trees in the forest. Sprawled beside the litter they found the bodies of two giant men, both unconscious, both harnessed by their shoulder-straps, both with hands raw and bleeding.

The doctor investigated the litter.

"Obstetric case!" he snapped in a professional tone.

Then he glanced at the two prostrate figures.

"This one is Steven Ballentyne," he said of the first; but of the other; he fought back an oath, for the doctor was not by nature a profane man.

"It's the man who killed Seth Robbins!"

IN THE case of the State versus Andrew Dougall the jury very promptly brought in a verdict of acquittal on the grounds of self-defense. The story told by Steven Ballentyne—the story of their journey through the storm—had much to do with it.

Of course, according to the canons of law and the statutes of the State of South Carolina, that story had no place in the trial record and it should never have been allowed to reach the ears of the jury. But it so happens that in certain sections of the South law is practised with a leniency which errs on the side of humanness.

The prosecutor entered his formal objection when Steven started and the judge ordered that the evidence be stopped, stating that such a story had nothing to do with the case. But Steven, who knew the judge personally, insisted that the story was vital to the issue and thereafter neither judge nor prosecutor objected.

Digitized by Google

Really, if the truth be told, the jury rather forgot that it was assembled to try Andrew Dougall for the killing of Seth Robbins.

Sufficient testimony had been produced, with the doctor as the star witness for the State, to prove that it might have been self-defense (which, as a matter of fact, it doubtless was) and the jury undertook, as juries will, to make of itself a committee of commendation. Which, aside from the fact that Andrew breathed the air of real freedom for the first time in three years, has little to do with the story.

Andrew returned to his swampland cabin from force of habit. And there Steven Ballentyne found him.

"I'm not a-mon of many words, Andrew; but I'm thinkin' ye might coom over to see y'r own godson."

"My own godson?"

"We named him Andrew Dougall Ballentyne."

Steven extracted a plug of tobacco from his hip pocket and bit off a huge mouthful, to hide his embarrassment.

"Have a chew?" he proffered awkwardly.

"Thanks."

Andrew, who never chewed tobacco, took the plug as bashfully as it was tendered and bit heroically.

"How 'bout takin' a little drink, Steven?" he said slowly.

"Just to—to—celebrate?"

HONEST TO DOUGHGOD

By W. C. Tuttle

Author of "A Bull Movement in Yellow Horse," "The Henpunchers of Piperock," etc.

I WAS christened Henry Clay Peck, but as soon as I gits big enough to answer to the yell uh "grub pile" I has my cognomen depleted to the extent that I answers to "Hen." Maw insisted that I be called Gilliland Van Dyke, but paw said it was too much like brandin' uh calf with the map uh Texas.

The next one to my left on the top pole of the corral is uh misfit uh nature, or whatever is to blame fer creatin' fat cowpunchers. His carcass requires the biggest tree ever put into uh stock saddle. His parents saddled him with the signature uh Lemuel Allender Bowles and uh forgivin' nature. He responds when yuh yells "Muley."

On my right, danglin' over the top pole is "Telescope" Tolliver. Telescope was originally, so he sez, John Quincy Tolliver, by gad suh! He allus adds the "By gad suh!" to give folks the impression that he's from the South, but I've got inside information that the nearest he ever came to bein' from the South was the time uh Montana sheriff chases him over the line into Wyoming and uh Wyoming sheriff chases him back.

We admires each other uh heap. Muley writes poetry; Telescope sings, and I plays the banjo. We're jist three cowpunchers—but talented. Uh puncher can have talents the same as bartenders, harness drummers and insurance agents.

Digitized by Google

Telescope sez that as far as morals goes we're loaded—never havin' used up what Nature originally gave us. Muley sez—

"There's two things they can't never lay at our door: we never stole another man's wife nor threw rocks at his kids."

But that about lets us out, I reckon. Muley's too danged covetous of other people's property. If he didn't combine pleasure with business we'd be uh lot better off. He can't seem to keep from poetin'. One night he rustled fifteen head uh Five-Dot cows out of uh corral, and leaves uh piece uh poetry stickin' on the gate, the same uh which reads:

I thanks yuh fer this chance to take,
Some Five-Dot cows, which I will sell,
And git myself uh poker stake.
And as fer you—go plumb to ——!

Muley, bein' the Poet Larict uh the county, fer the reason that he's the only one what can write uh rhyme, is immediately and soon apprehended down at Paradise, and called to answer fer his sins. He tells me and Telescope with tears in his eyes that we got to figger out uh scheme to git him loose or he'll git sent to the pen, thereby breakin' the set. Telescope chides him gently.

"Yuh ain't got the sense that God give geese in Chiny!" sez Telescope. "What did yuh have to write poetry fer, yuh cross between uh loco weed and uh pail uh lard?"

Muley don't hang his head with shame like he should have done under the circumstances, cause his neck is too danged short. He jist winks real hard and makes funny noises with his throat.

"Well," sez I, "we can't let uh guilty man suffer, Telescope. Let's go home. I'll play somethin' sad-like, and you sing Muley's ol' favorite, 'Jist Break the News to Mother,' and mebby we can figger out uh scheme."

We did. That night we rides over to the Lazy-Y corral and appropriates all uh ol' man Wiscomb's ridin' hosses, and hazes 'em plumb over into the Frog Pond basin. We shore has uh chore writin' what we pins to the corral gate. It reads like this:

Though sad but true we must relate
Poets is thick in this here State.
We writes this rhyme so honest men
Won't have to languish in the pen.

Poetry not bein' evidence no more, they has to turn Muley loose. Muley promises that he'll do better next time, but it sort uh peeves him to find out that me and Telescope can write poetry, so he starts tryin' to pick the banjo, and drives us off the ranch tryin' to sing, "Love Me and the World Is Mine."

Uh course me and Telescope steals them broncs to prove uh alibi fer Muley, but all we does with 'em is to haze 'em over to the basin and let 'em drift. We tells Muley about the stunt, and after they turns him loose he disappears fer uh few days. When he shows up ag'in he hands us each uh hundred and fifty dollars.

"Took them broncs down to Silver Springs and sold 'em," sez he, sort uh offhand like. "Them Lazy-Y fellers has beefed and beefed about losin' 'em, and I jist couldn't stand it to see 'em disappointed. Another day and them fool broncs would have been home. They was trailin' this way when I finds 'em, and prompt action saves us reg'lar money."

Uh course we chides Muley uh heap, while we saddles up to go down to Paradise, but we chides him without malice in our hearts. One-fifty covers uh multitude uh morals. Also, we can all three set into uh poker game to oncet, which makes it bad fer any one else at the table. We drifts across the hills with joy in our hearts. We jist can't seem to hate nobody. Even Telescope speaks kindly uh ol' Bill Metzger, the sheriff what chased him over the line that time. Uh coyote drifts out of uh draw ahead of us, the same uh which usually calls fer at least eighteen chunks uh hot lead, but this time he ain't molested.

"Look at the ol' loafer," sez Telescope, standin' up in his stirrups to ease his new saddle. "Slant-eyed ol' pelican! He'll probably go home and tell his ol' woman that the Three Disgraces is paralyzed in the hands."

We fogs along until we're about five miles from Paradise, when we sees uh hoss wanderin' along the skyline of uh hill. Seems to be saddled so we goes over and investigates.

"Side-saddle!" snorts Muley. "Who in —— rides uh saddle like that on this range?"

"I would if I had uh chance," states uh voice, and then we sees her.

Digitized by Google

SHE'S standin' there beside uh mesquite, and I reckon she's the maddest pretty fe-male I ever laid eyes upon. I ain't goin' to tell yuh what she looked like. It's too danged much like tryin' to tell somebody about the stamped design on uh new saddle. They knows what yore talkin' about but they don't know what yuh mean.

"I begs your pardon, ma'am," sez Muley. "Yuh see I didn't look fer——"

"Don't apologize," sez she, with uh grin. "What you jist said ain't one, two, three with what I been thinkin' fer the last hour. I got off to pick uh flower and that pony broke loose. I've trailed him fer three miles, but he wouldn't stop. Are you goin' to Paradise?".

"Ma'am," orates Telescope, "I'm there now. Ma used to tell me about the land what is fairer than this, but I doubted her."

With his eyes rolled up like uh sick sheep, Muley recites:

Her eyes outshine the desert stars
Her mouth is sweet as cake,
And the freckles on her features
Shone like lilies on uh lake.

The fe-male starts to grin, but when she sees that we're serious she irons out her face.

"Ma'am," sez I, "I'm sorry I ain't got my banjo. I plays well,"

"That's nice," sez she. "I love good music. I am Miss Adamson, the new teacher at Paradise, and I'm lost."

"Miss Adamson," states Telescope, "you can calm yore fears, cause you shore ain't lost no more. My name's Tolliver—John Quincy Tolliver, by gad—huh. The party on the pinto is Hen Peck, and that emaciated lookin' party on the Roman-nosed bay is Muley Bowles. We're all from the Cross-J; free, white and twenty-one and we're glad to meet yuh."

"Lemuel is my first name, ma'am," sez Muley. "Lemuel Allender Bowles."

"My folks was particular thataway, too," sez I. "When I enters this here vale uh tears I gits Henry Clay added to the name uh Peck, which I natcherally inherits. My dad's name was Henry, and bein' as he had uh ranch in Clay county, Missouri, I—"

"Unique," sez the lady.

"No, ma'am—corn," sez I.

Telescope tightens up her cinch and helps her on the bronc, and we all fogs on toward Paradise. She don't sabe much about ridin' but who ever cared how uh angel handled uh hoss. She's hivin' up at ol' man Irvin's place, so we rides plumb to the gate with her. She thanks us uh heap and makes uh fuss about how much she owes us.

"Won't yuh all come down to see me once in uh while?" she asks. "It really does git lonesome evenin's. Come down, all of you. I'd love to hear Mister Tolliver sing, and Mister Peck accompany him on the banjo. Come down any time, please."

The way she sez "please" would make uh feller go out and kiss uh sidewinder if she asked him to. We replies that nothin' would please us more, and then we wanders back to the bright lights uh Dug Chaffin's saloon.

"Like to hear Mister Tolliver sing, and hear Mister Peck accompany him on the banjo, eh?" orates Muley, sarcastic like. "Them's hy-iu accomplishments but too boisterous. Now, if I had uh chance to pour uh li'l poetry into her ear—mama, mine!"

"Poetry," pronounces Telescope," is all right so long as yuh don't abuse yore ability. It's good stuff in it's place, like hooch or uh cold deck, but when uh feller uses it to notify the sheriff or uses it to designate that uh lady has freckles on her nose—I'm ag'in it. Sabe?"

"Freckles is but uh beauty spot to call attention to the spot on which they lingers," states Muley. "Don't think fer uh minute, Telescope, that I aims to slander the lady. I shore admires her uh heap, and nothin' would please me more than to introduce her to you as Misses Lemuel Allender Bowles. That's uh fair soundin' name, eh? Uh heap more noticeable than Misses Peck or Telescope's wife."

"Henry Clay Peck ain't no name to sneeze at," I states. "It's honest, by grab! My ol' dad——"

I'm jist goin' to tell how the first grain measure was named after one uh my ancestors, but Telescope interrupts.

"When yuh argues the value uh names, Muley, yuh shore got to let mine set on the first pew. John Quincy Tolliver, by gad suh! The Kentucky Tollivers is one uh the bluegrassedest famblys in America. Any woman would be honored to bear that name."

"Don't let's quarrel," I advises. "Names is nothin' but inheritance, like hook-noses, cross-eyes and uh taste fer hooch. We never made 'em. Uh fortune-teller tol' me

Digitized by Google

once that some uh my ancestors was bush-whackers in the time uh Henry th' Awful, and that some was beheaded and the rest lynched. She said I was born to romance."

"Swashbucklers,' corrects Telescope. "Nowadays we designates 'em as 'blow hards.' Also, she was wrong about the period. Henry the Awful was——"

"Let sleepin' dogs gather nò moss," interrupts Muley, squeezin' the last drop of his sixth glass uh third-rail. "Pore ol' Henry's dead years ago, and li'l Lemuel Allender Bowles don't feel so awful good today, either. Here's to the fairest flower that in uh garden grew. Her face is like uh —uh—uh—shay, Telescope, wha's her face like, anyway. Huh?"

But Tesescope is already pourin' out his soul in song, and Muley weeps on the pool-table 'cause he can't seem to remember what her face looked like.

Now I'm commencin' to git back to where I starts from, with me and Muley and Telescope draped over the top pole of the corral. It's the next mawnin' after we meets the school-ma'am.

Not havin' much appetite fer breakfast we adjourns early. We're settin' there mournin' over our past lives and wishin' we didn't have such pintoed characters, when Telescope opines——

"Uh gal with uh face like that must grade about twenty per ounce. I hope she don't throw her young life away on some ordinary cowpuncher, that's all I hope." Telescope sighs deep-like, and me and Muley follers suit.

"Noble sentiments," sez I. "It would be like feedin' vanilly ice cream to uh coyote."

We sighs in chorus ag'in.

Muley sighs uh couple uh extra times and chews the stub of uh lead-pencil, which he has been usin' on uh piece uh wrappin'-paper.

"Read her out loud, Muley," urges Telescope, but Muley sighs and shakes his head:

"I jist can't seem to find uh word that's right. What in —— rhymes with pain? She reads like this:"

> My love is livin' in the town,
> It fills my heart with pain,
> To know that I ain't with her now,

"She's uh dinger as far as she goes, Muley," sez Telescope. "Can't yuh think uh nothin' that rhymes with pain?"

"I got it," sez I. "Yuh might say, 'Tomorrow it may rain.' How's that, eh?"

Muley puts his foot into my equator, and I sprawls into the corral, right under the feet of uh outlaw bronc called Pirate. I jist about gits kicked into the middle uh next week before I escapes.

"That's the last time I ever helps uh poet in distress," I states, as soon as I gits back on the rail. "They're uh thankless tribe. In love or in jail it's all the same. I'm goin' over and tune up my ol' banjo. There's uh lady what loves good music, and she's plumb crazy to hear me play."

"She shore is if she wants to the second time," states Muley.

I goes over to the bunk-house, and pretty soon Telescope and Muley comes in and sets down. They rolls cigarets and Telescope clears his throat.

"Well," sez I, "spit her out, Telescope."

"Hen, we've done come to the conclusion that we can't all come to see her to oncet. What do yuh think about it?"

"Two ag'in one is uh majority. What's the verdict?"

"It's thisaway, Hen," explains Telescope. "All things bein' free and equal, we're goin' to leave the decision to the lady. We'll write the names of the days uh the week on pieces uh paper, put 'em in uh hat and draw. The feller gits to call on her the night he draws. Sabe? That won't give nobody the advantage."

"And," sez I, "the other two stays right here on the ranch. Don't go cuttin' into the other feller's night a-tall, eh? We shore got to play this here love game on the square."

They both agrees, and we draws from the hat. I gits Monday, Telescope draws Friday, and Muley's affections shows on Wednesday. Bein' as to-day is Monday, I shaves some careful-like and oils my saddle.

"Don't git mushy and tell yore past life, Hen," warns Telescope. "Uh feller's apt to fergit himself in uh case like this. Yore past won't interest her none to speak of, and me and Muley figgers too danged prominent like. She might turn us all down fer uh sheriff or uh United States marshal and tell all she knows. Sabe?"

"One thing I never does," sez I," and that is to commit social suicide."

I reads that in uh female's magazine, what comes to the Cross-J by mistake oncet.

Digitized by Google

I GITS on my calico bronc, hangs the banjo on the saddle horn and proceeds to show the Cross-J that Hen Peck can ride 'em straight up. I knows that there's uh stick under that pinto's tail, but I don't wish to spoil Muley's idea of uh good joke. When I gits that pinto lined out toward Paradise I finds that three strings is busted on that banjo, the same uh which fills me with sad thoughts.

"This shore is one —— of uh situation," sez I. "Not another banjo string this side uh Helena, and uh li'l gal simply pinin' away fer to hear me play.

The nearer I gits to town the worse I'm feelin'. I feels so bad that I enters Dug Chaffin's rum palace and renews my vitality, and also gits vivacious. That's another word I reads in that magazine. I meets "Doughgod" Smith and he also gits vivacious.

Doughgod's got lots uh money and the disposition of uh bulldog.

"I'd admire to hear yuh play uh tune, Hen," sez he, noticin' that I'm packin' uh banjo. "After listenin' to Tony, the Hunk, play the squeeze organ over at the Cross-in-uh-Box, I'm game to listen to anythin'."

"She's uh good ol' rig but she's done busted down, Doughgod," sez I. "Yuh can't expect to fan uh machine like that over uh bronc's head fer any length uh time and expect it to run smooth right away. If yuh hunger fer music I'll sing fer yuh."

"Hen," sez he, pattin' me on the back, "don't put yourself out to try and entertain me. The way I feels right now I don't miss singin' uh bit. Much obliged jist the same."

Doughgod horns into uh poker game, and I absorbs uh few more scoops. When I'm organized sufficient-like I opines to go over and serenade the school-ma'am.

I has uh hard time gettin' my bearin's, but pretty soon I gits to goin' good. Sudden-like I remembers that I'm shy on strings.

"Now," sez I, "you cross between uh distillery and uh bale uh loco weed, where do yuh think yore goin', eh? Goin' to serenade uh lady fair, eh? Goin' down there with uh souse on. Hen Peck, you ain't fit to carry hawg meat to uh bear. No-good, common ol' puncher, with loads uh sin on yore conscience.

"You ain't fit to see her or listen to her voice. Yore jist uh drunk ol' cow rustler, and if yuh got what was comin' to yuh you'd be over in Deer Lodge, wearin' uh number like uh box-car. Yore hyas cultus."

That kind uh talk from me makes me fell uh heap bad, but I has to agree that it's Gospel truth even if it does yank on my heart-strings.

"Nothin' like knowin' yoreself," I informs uh fence post. "Hen Peck is uh wise ol' coot—yessir. I ain't no good, but by cripes, I got two of the best friends on earth. Telescope and Muley. Good enough fer any gal on earth. All I got is two friends and uh lovin' disposition. No use in three tryin' to win—nossir. Two's company—threes uh crowd. I'm goin' back to Dug's place, where there's life and cheer. Love is but uh fleetin' flower, and mine has fleeted."

I cries uh heap, and my heart lies in my bosom like half-done flapjacks on yore stummick, and the scaldin' tears obstructs my vision to the extent that when somebody throws uh clump uh mesquite bushes at me I can't dodge.

The moon is wanin' when I manages to git out from under the brush, so I forks my pinto and comes home. I ain't what you'd designate as uh gay lookin' Lothario to look at, but I feels that I'm to be commended uh heap. I don't aim to tell the boys what I done cause they'd say I got col' feet on the job. Also, they'd use up all the nights between 'em, and Hen Peck would have to play to the bunk-house walls. Telescope and Muley is settin' un the fence when I rides in, and they looks me over some careful. I turns my bronc into the corral, and starts fer the cook-house.

"Is her paw in Paradise, Hen?" asks Telescope.

"No," sez I. "Why do yuh ask that?"

"What happened to yuh, Hen? Did the lady smear yuh with uh rollin'-pin or has the Crees gone on the war path? Yore uh sight, Hennery."

"Jist general wear and tear," sez I. "I'm hungry."

Muley grins all over his fat face, and recites:

> He went to see his lady fair.
> He loved her passin' well.
> He played some banjo music,
> And came home all shot to ——.

Digitized by Google

"Ain't that uh humdinger, Hen?" laughs Telescope. "Muley's shore wastin' his talents in uh place like this. Did yuh tell her that me and Muley'd be down this week?"

"I did not," sez I. "Why take the joy out of her life thataway? I believes in lettin' somebody else be the bearer uh sad news. I'm not advertisin' you fellers, believe me. Why should I mention you, eh?"

"That's fair enough," admits Muley, and when we're together he gits confidential like.

"Hen, what in —— does uh feller talk about to uh fe-male? I loses my nerve when it comes to that. Tell me somethin' to say, won't yuh, Hen?"

"Aw, anythin'. Recite her that poem yuh wrote about Snow-shoe Mary. Jist keep yore face out uh personalities, Muley."

"What's personalities, Hen?"

"Aw, corsets and stockin's and——"

"——!" he snorts. "What do yuh think I am, Hen? Uh dressmaker? Also I don't intend to recite Snow-shoe Mary. Why dog-gone yore hide, that poem wasn't wrote fer female ears. Yore kind advice leads me to believe that you wishes me to not only be put out of the runnin' but yuh also desires that I fills uh early grave. Did she enjoy yore playin'? Yore banjo looks to me like yuh sort uh overdid yoreself, Hennery. Now, if you was uh poet——"

"I'd admire to git lynched," sez I, and then I goes up to the cook-house, and gits cussed by the cook, fer comin' in so late.

The next mornin' Muley can't seem to git his mind on his work a-tall. He can't think about nothin' but his chance to see the lady. He aims to put his rope on the li'l sorrel he's been ridin', but he don't notice when he misses and the loop snags ol' Pirate.

So long as he don't notice his mistake, me and Telescope is too gentlemanly to call his attention to it. He jist shortens his rope, turns his back on that outlaw and starts leadin' it over where his saddle is layin'.

I reckon that hoss never had been ignored thataway before, and it cuts him deep. He sticks back his ears on his rattlesnake head and grabs Muley between the shoulders. Comes uh squeal and uh cloud uh dust and Muley's layin' over in the corner with nothin' left of his shirt except the collar, and the bronc breaks straight fer the Wyoming line.

WE MOSEYS over and gazes at Muley's recumbent form. He's got uh beautiful expression on his face, and all he needs is uh bow and arrer and uh couple uh wings to pose fer uh statoo uh Cupid in the Corral. He's starin' at the sky, and all to oncet his lips opens and he recites:

> Her eyes is like the evenin' star,
> She's graceful like uh deer.
> Her mouth is like uh rosebud.
> I wish—I wish—I—huh——

"I wish I had uh glass uh beer," finishes Telescope. "Now, Hen, you can see what love does to uh feller. That Muley person is so danged deep in love that he don't notice that he's leadin' Pirate. No sir, he don't know nothin' a-tall. When uh poet gits in love he's liable to kiss uh mewl. Harmless and happy but lots uh bother."

Muley rolls over and sets up. He claws some corral dust out of his eyes, and looks around.

"What in —— is goin' on around here?" he asks, foolish like. "I can't seem to remember nothin' except beautiful winged critters, with floatin' garments, and music playin' and ——"

"Never mind the human insects, Muley," sez I. "Go and git uh shirt on. Uh sylph-like figger is uh thing uh beauty and uh joy forever, but yore packin' too much lard on yore carcass to qualify. Git inside uh piece uh flannel before some pork packer comes along and mavericks yuh."

"Aw, you ain't got nothin' to say, Hen," he opines, fumblin' with the collar of that departed shirt. "You ain't no beautiful statoo in the nood. I ain't goin' to put on no danged shirt until——"

"Good mornin', gentlemen."

We turns some sudden, and there is the school-ma'am lookin' over the top uh the corral from the back of her hoss.

"Howdy," sez I, and Telescope almost prostrates hisself in the dust, when his foot slips in uh soft spot. "Won't yuh come in?"

"Come in and make yourself to home," invites Telescope, but she grins and shakes her head.

"No, thank you," sez she. "I'm not familiar enough with the interior of corrals to feel at home in one. Didn't I hear Mister Bowles's voice as I rode up?"

I looks around quick and there is Muley, humped up in the corner of the fence, with

Digitized by Google

uh saddle blanket over his head, and about twelve inches uh bare skin shinin' in the sun.

"No, ma'am," sez I. "Muley's been gone some time. He heard that his wife has run away with uh half-breed Piegan, and he's gone down to the reservation to investigate."

"Isn't that some one over in the corner?" she asks, cranin' her neck over the rail.

"Yes'm," sez Telescope. "That's uh sick Injun takin' uh saddle-blanket treatment fer ticks. We handles most of the local cases up here. This one is particularly stubborn. He's been under that blanket fer nearly an hour, and only one tick has left him."

"How strange," she exclaims. "I've heard of all kinds of diseases and treatments, but this is decidedly novel. I studied nursing for some time, and I natcherally am interested. May I come in and watch the proceedin's?"

"Deelighted!" sez Telescope. "Git off yore hoss and come inside."

"No, I'll jist set on top of the fence with you, and we can watch it much better."

I hears Muley groan as we climbs the fence, and I sort uh feels fer him. It's about ninety-nine in the shade right now, and that blanket shore is odoriferous. We perches on the rail like three buzzards watchin' fer uh sick calf to quit this vale uh tears, and makes remarks about the sufferin' bunch uh humanity under the blanket.

"How long will it be before he is cured?" she asks.

"Well," opines Telescope, "he's been under there fer an hour now, and only one tick has drifted away. As uh usual thing they has six ticks, so, unless the other five decides to stampede in uh flock, we're due to sit here fer several hours yet."

"I don't mind," sez she, sweet-like. "I haven't uh thing else to do. Isn't his skin awful light for an Indian? I'll bet he'll be badly sunburned where the sun is strikin' that large bare spot, and if I was in yore place I'd——"

"Snap! Smash!"

That's all that ever saved Muley. That top rail wa'n't any too strong anyway, and with three of us in the center it couldn't stand the pressure when Telescope begins to bounce up and down with glee. I lights inside the corral in the dust, and I sees uh whirl uh skirts and boots, where Telescope and the school-ma'am tangles up on the other side.

I glances the other way and I sees somethin' that Nature claims to be impossible. Muley weighs about two hundred and forty, and the fence is eight feet high, but by the horns on the moon, he never scratched it goin' over. He jist sailed like uh bird, and the saddle-blanket which had draped his shoulders was still in the air over the spot where he had sat when he hit the ground on the other side. There was jist uh rippin' sound in the atmosphere, two grunts, uh slam, and Muley's inside the bunk-house with the door locked.

That fe-male shore is game. She wipes the dust out of her eyes, and laughs hearty-like, and me and Telescope joins her with great cheer. She climbs the fence ag'in and gazes at the spot where Muley had been.

"Well!" sez she, sort uh surprised-like. "Our patient has gone!"

"Yes'm," I agree. "They don't stay long after the ticks leave 'em, and ticks can't stand excitement. When that rail broke I saw them five ticks lope off across the corral, and I reckon by this time they're half-way to the reservation lookin' fer another healthy buck to inhabit."

"I'm sorry it happened," she states, as she crawls on to her bronc ag'in. "I would like to have seen that Indian. Was he an Albino?"

"No, ma'am," sez Telescope. "He was uh Piegan. The Albinos all live in Arizona."

AFTER she's gone, me and Telescope sets there fer quite uh spell and don't have much to say. Pretty soon Telescope sighs deep and rolls uh cigaret. I sighs some, too, and borrows the makin's.

"Where do we sleep tonight, Hen?" he asks. "Bein' as our guns is both in the bunk-house we're helpless-like."

"Sleep in the barn, I reckon. I ain't goin' into that bunk-house until Muley leaves, that's uh cinch. I'll bet that hombre would admire to waller in our gore.

"Wife run away with uh Piegan! Haw! Haw! Haw! I'll bet that Muley won't git that saddle-blanket smell out of his hair fer uh week. He may still make rhymes, Hennery, but he shore won't smell like uh

Digitized by Google

reg'lar poet. Here comes Doughgod Smith. Wonder what the ol' pelican wants up here."

Doughgod rides up, and we exchanges salutations.

"Where's Muley?" asks Doughgod.

"Over in th' bunk-house," sez Telescope.

"Reckon I'll go over and see him," he opines, slidin' off his bronc. "I got somethin' fer him, and I rides all the way up here to give it to him."

"Go right on over, Doughgod," sez Telescope, pleasant-like. "I feels that Muley is in uh receptive mood right now."

Doughgod grins, and ambles right over to the bunk-house door. He don't rap. He opens the door, gits half-way in and then comes right out on his neck. The door slams behind him, and he sets there on the ground and paws away at his face like uh cub-bear at uh bee-tree. Pretty soon he gits up, walks into the corner of the cabin and falls down ag'in. We hears him cussin' some fluently as he gits up, and this time he heads our way. He has his hands over his eyes but he hits the corral gate dead center, butts right into the snubbin' post, and falls down ag'in.

"That's good so far as she goes, Doughgod," applauds Telescope. "But it ain't nothin' out of the ordinary. Now, if yuh had blindfolded yoreself, hit the gate dead center and then jumped the post, that would have been some stunt.

"My Gawd!" wails Doughgod. "What fer kind of uh way is this to treat uh guest? Bust uh hoss-liniment bottle on his head! My Gawd!"

He sets up and wipes the tears out of his eyes with both hands.

"What did yuh say to him?" asks Telescope. "Muley don't do things like that as uh general thing."

"I didn't say nothin' to make him act thataway," wails Doughgod. "He was lookin' at his watch, and I said, 'Don't she tick!' That's all I said to him, honest."

"If uh man done that to me I'd shore smoke him up," orates Telescope.

"I ain't got no gun, though," complains Doughgod. "Never have uh gun when I needs one. Loan me yores, will yuh, Telescope, and I'll immediately and soon find out why I'm assaulted."

"You can have mine," sez I. "I never throws uh friend down when he's in need. Yore welcome to it, Doughgod. She's hangin' over my bunk, beside Telescope's."

Doughgod gits the tears dried up long enough to git on his bronc. He shore looked funny, puffin' away at his pipe, with the tears runnin' down his cheeks, and the purple place over his right eye, where the bottle had lingered.

"Gentlemen," sez he, solemn-like, "there is times when the American language ain't noways sufficient nor competent to elucidate the extent of uh feller's feelin's. Jist to attempt to say what I think of the Cross-J and it's hired help would be like offerin' salt to uh thirsty man. I thought I knowed uh lot uh flossy cuss words, but they pales into insignificance when I consults my immortal soul. Adios."

He swings his bronc around, and the last we sees uh him he's still reachin' up reg'lar like to wipe away the tears.

We don't invade the bunk-house, so we don't see Muley until supper-time. He looks us over some close but don't say uh word. In fact there is uh great lack uh conversation at the table, the same uh which is noticed by ol' man Miller, our boss. We're used to uh bright flow uh personalities durin' our mastication time, and this here stillness gits on th' ol' man's nerves.

"Well," sez he, shovin' his chair back, and reachin' fer his hat, "I don't know jist what's the matter with you Jaspers, but as uh general treatment I'd suggest sheep dip."

Th' ol' man leaves the shack, and Muley sets there and stares at the floor. He's uh heap like Doughgod was — too mad to express it in words.

"I resents that implication!" orates Telescope. "No danged man—not even the boss—can imply that I've got ticks. How about you, Hen?"

"Not uh tick!" sez I, emphatic like.

Muley rolls uh cigaret, sort uh absent-minded like, takes out uh match, lights his smoke and throws it away. He puts the match in his mouth, and because it won't puff he tries to scratch his tobacco sack on his pants.

"Never try to scratch tobacco, Muley," sez Telescope. "Allus use uh cigaret paper to light yore match with."

Muley spits the match out and beats it fer the bunk-house. Me and Telescope joins him in uh few minutes.

"My gosh!" sniffs Telescope. "Who spilled the liniment?"

Digitized by Google

Muley looks us over fer uh minute and then busts out laughin'.

"Which one uh you Jaspers did I hit?" he asks.

"You did not," sez I. "You hit Doughgod Smith."

"I—I hit who?" gasps Muley.

"Doughgod Smith," I repeats. "Hit him right square in the face, and he wept tears all the way to Paradise."

"Well!" sez Muley, after thinkin' it over. He's uh honest man."

"Meanin' which?" I asks.

"He came up to pay me the forty dollars I loaned him in uh poker game the other night."

"No use weepin' over spilled liniment," sez I. "Mebby he'll pay yuh the next time he sees yuh, Muley."

"Not if I see him first. I shore don't want to look like uh porus plaster when I goes to see the lady. I don't reckon she knowed it was me under that blanket; do yuh?"

"No," sez Telescope. "You jist keep yore shirt on, Muley, and she won't never know it was you."

I don't reckon he ever heard me tell her that Muley's wife had run away with uh Piegan. Anyway, he saddles up and fogs off toward Paradise.

The next mornin' Muley comes back to us with uh sad look in his eye. He don't eat much breakfast, and jist moons around.

"Didn't yuh enjoy the evenin'?" I asks.

"Uh-huh," sez Muley, queer-like. "Shore I did. Jist because I don't throw my hat in the air and yell yuh don't think I had uh good time. Uh natcheral poet ain't boisterous-like, Hen. His abilities sort uh calm him down. Sabe?"

Uh li'l later on I finds Muley alone on the shady side of the cabin. He's settin' there on uh box, gazin' off into space.

"Hen," sez he, "I ain't so danged awful bad, but I'm too bad at that."

"What yuh figgerin' on doin', Muley—gittin' bit by uh snake?"

He don't answer fer uh while. I reckon my reply went right over his head, cause he jist sighs and opines thusly:

"Hen, uh feller like me ain't noways fit fer uh gal like that. I've examined all my past life and I finds that it don't assay uh trace uh good. She's too danged good fer me."

"Well," sez I, consolin like," you don't need to worry about it. You ain't got her have yuh?"

He shakes his head and digs holes in the dirt with his heels.

"No, Hen, and I don't expect to. She's out uh my class. Now, take you and Telescope for instance. He's from uh good ol' fambly, and he's got uh lot of ability. Outside of his face and feet he ain't uh hard person to look at. And, Hen, that hombre shore can entertain uh person with his voice. Why, when he sings 'Jist Break the News to Mother,' I can feel myself layin' out there on uh battle-field all shot to ——. That's art, Hennery.

"Now, take youreself, Hen. You must be from uh good fambly, too. Yore ol' mother must uh been uh mighty gentle woman to take the trouble to raise uh boy like you. You can play the banjo some plentiful, and uh woman likes uh musical man.

"I leave it to you, Hen, if it ain't the right thing fer me to do. I'm goin' to step aside and let you and Telescope fight it out, and may the best man win. I'm sort of uh black sheep, and while I loves her like uh bear loves honey, I know I ain't fit to play the rôle. I got uh quart uh hooch inside the bunk-house, Hen. Let's go in and drink uh toast to you and Telescope."

We did just that li'l thing. We has enough toasts to make uh square meal, an pretty soon Muley gits tearful ag'in.

"Don't tell ol' Telescope what I aims to do, Hen," he pleads. "To have some one applaud my actions makes it hard to bear. We'll jist let on that I'm still in the race."

"Muley," sez I, "I'm uh heap proud to know uh man like you what knows all about himself and tells it without reservation. Outside of poetin' you shore don't amount to much. No gal would be happy with you. I agrees that it's the reasonable thing fer you to do."

"Hen," sez he, "don't git too danged personal in yore remarks. How do you know that no gal would be happy with me? Outside uh poetin'—why, you gol dinged, hoss-faced maverick, what did you ever do beside bein' seventeen kinds of uh fool simultaneously, and playin' uh banjo uh li'l?"

"Nothin', Muley," I agrees. "Not uh danged thing. You and me is two misfits. We've both busted all the Commandments from the middle both ways. Neither of us is fit to cinch her saddle. Telescope is the

Digitized by Google

only virtuous man in the set. There's uh hy-iu man, Muley. Dog-gone, there shore is one he-man. Good fambly, wise as uh barn-owl, and he shore does save his money."

"That last is too true," wails Muley." "He shore can save. He borrowed uh ten spot from me six months ago, and he thinks so much of it that he won't give it back."

"I got uh good idea," sez I, depletin' that bottle about the full of uh mewl's ear. "Me and you'll job ol' Telescope. We has hereby agreed that we ain't fit, so we'll smooth the trail for Telescope. We'll take our reg'lar turns goin' down to see her, but we won't see her. Sabe? Natcherally, without no opposition he wins out. Our ol' pal is happy, and the fe-male gits uh prize. We'll go down and play poker all night instead of courtin' her, and everybody'll be happy."

"That's uh good hunch, Henry, but it takes money to play poker. That bunch down there has simply got my goat. If Telescope'd pay me that ten, and I could git Doughgod to leave that forty where I could pick it up, I'd have uh stake."

"Aw, make Telescope uh present uh that ten," I advises. "Yuh got to figger that courtin' costs money, Muley. You know danged well that if he paid yuh back that money he'd have to borrow it ag'in. Why don't yuh go right down and ask Doughgod fer that money?"

"Not me, Hen! Not li'l Lemuel Allender Bowles. He was buyin' some .45 ca'tridges the other day, and he informed Nick Parsons that he was jist honin' to meet me. Said he wanted to hand me somethin'."

On Friday night Telescope dolls up like uh plush hoss. He wears one uh my blue silk shirts and Muley's new hat. The next day he's uh heap vivacious. He gits me off to one side and informs me that he's had uh hy-iu time.

"It's shore goin' to be uh hard row fer me to hoe," he states. "Miss Adamson shore does cotton to you and Muley uh heap. Muley's poetry made uh hit with her, and she sez that banjo music hits her right where she lives, when it's played by uh master hand. I'm afraid that you fellers have got the jump on li'l Telescope Tolliver, by gad suh!"

"Be uh good cheer," I advises. "Faint heart never won on two small pair."

"Takes money," he complains. "Uh feller what is short on money like I am ain't got no chance with uh fe-male's heart. If I had twenty I'd feel uh heap safer."

I don't offer it to him, but I talks with Muley later on.

"My cripes!" sez Muley. "What do yuh think I'm goin' to do—finance uh weddin'?"

"Friendship is uh great asset," I orates. "Telescope is our pal, and I reckon he'd do as much fer us. You must remember he's the Jasper what wrote most uh that poetry what kept you out of the pen."

"I got ten what ain't workin'," sez he. "I ain't no piker, Hen."

I hands Telescope twenty and he's thankful.

ON MONDAY night I goes down, plays poker all night, and comes home and lies to Telescope. On Wednesday night Muley does the same thing. He tells Telescope that the fe-male spoke well uh him, and he's pleased. On Saturday Telescope asks me fer enough to buy some tobacco. Th' ol' man is goin' down-town after supplies.

"Where's the twenty?" I asks him. "Spend it all last night?"

"Gals shore come high, Hen," he sighs.

I loans him two-bits this time. The next day, bein' Sunday, me and Muley takes the wagon and goes to town after uh stove the ol' man bought, and natcherally we horns into uh game uh draw in Dug's place. Muley has jist stood pat in uh good pot when Doughgod Smith comes in the door. Him and Muley sees each other at the same time.

"I've shore had uh hard time gittin' to see you, Muley, "sez Doughgod, and reaches fer his hip.

Muley shore is some speedy on the draw, and jist as Doughgod's hand moves forward, he fans two .45 slugs across the table at Doughgod, and busts the hinges off the back door gittin' away.

As soon as the smoke clears away I sees that Doughgod is still on his feet. He's starin' at his right hand some industrious-like. He opens his mouth several times before he sez uh word, and when he does it's some profane.

"——!" sez he. "Wouldn't that break yore heart?"

He holds up his right hand and lets some scraps uh paper drift to the floor.

"I asks you all to take notice," he orates. "I hereby states that I'm goin' to pay him that forty dollars or die. First time I tries

Digitized by Google

to pay him he assaults me with uh bottle uh hoss liniment, and this time he shoots three tens and two fives into ribbons. My Gawd! There ain't no sense in destroyin' good coin of the realm thataway when there's lots uh better targets to practise on."

"Don't be stingy, Doughgod," sez I. "If I ever had as much money as you got I'd shore rather have folks shoot at my roll than at me."

Muley ain't no place in sight when I goes over to the wagon, so I fans that team out of town and ambles back toward the Cross-J. About two miles out uh town Muley steps out from behind uh mesquite. He's got uh gun in his hand and sorrow in his eyes.

"Did he die?" he asks, sort uh careless like, as though uh killin' was uh daily occurrence with him.

"Muley," sez I, "you can't expect nothin' else when yuh shoots uh man at close range with uh .45. All pore Doughgod was tryin' to do was to git that forty out of his hip pocket and pay his debts."

"My Gawd!" wails Muley, leanin' ag'in the wheel, and moppin' the perspiration from his brow. "The Jasper what said that honesty is the best policy was loco. Hereafter I don't loan money to no blamed man unless he's dishonest. It's dangerous! Where's the posse, Hen?"

"Organizin'. I figgered that they'd overtake me before I got this far. You better hop right into the wagon here with me, Muley."

"That'll do uh lot uh good!" he wails. "Do yuh think fer uh minute that you can outrun uh posse with uh dead-ex wagon?"

"Muley," sez I, pityin' like, "no wonder yore uh fugitive from justice. You ain't got no ideas a-tall. See them ol' sacks in the bottom of the wagon? There's yore getaway. I'll pull one over yore head and one over yore feet and pile the rest on top. Then I'll roll yuh under the seat. If they asks me I'll say it's some spuds I'm takin' home."

Muley's willin' to take uh chance on anythin', so I fixes him up. As I rolls him under the seat I hears uh muffled voice opine:

"Hen, youre awful good to me. Do the same fer you some time."

"Don't mention it, Muley." sez I. "I know yuh would."

I drives along fer uh spell, and Muley rides comfortable. Then I gits uh happy thought.

"Muley!" I yells. "The posse's in sight, and I got to leave the road. Hang on!"

"*Ooof glubb mmff!*" I hears emanatin' from the roll, so I opines that he's thankin' me some more.

I swings the team off the road and over some of the worst goin' yuh ever saw. Part of the time I'm on the seat and part of the time in the air. You can imagine what it was like to the man on the bottom of the wagon — uh wagon without no springs. When I unrolls Muley down back of the barn he's shore uh sight. Take uh man what tilts the scales at two hundred and forty, wrap him up in uh lot uh dirty gunnysacks, bounce him in the bottom of uh lumber wagon fer eight miles and then unroll him, and you've got uh pitcher uh Muley Bowles.

"Did we—huh—dodge 'em?" he wheezes, tryin' to rub the kinks out of his legs, and peek around the corner at the same time.

"So far," I replies. "You shore got to give me uh lot uh credit, Muley. I shore have done uh lot fer you on this day uh the month."

"I know it, Hen. I appreciates it uh heap. Where do I go now?"

"Under the bunk-house fer you, Muley," I replies.

When the ranch-house was built fer the Cross-J, the ol' man opines to build uh root-house. He gits it dug about three feet deep and he runs into solid rock. Not havin' any blastin' powder he abandons that place and digs in another. In order to cover up the hole with the least labor he builds the bunk-house over it.

"Close quarters," complains Muley. "Dog-gone, uh feller ain't got room to breathe in there, Hen."

"Easier'n breathin' with uh rope around yore neck, "I orates, and Muley agrees. "You got to crawl all the way on yore stummick, though," sez I. "Yuh shore got to keep low, cause fer all we knows the posse may be up talkin' to the ol' man."

He did jist that li'l thing—crawl. I hauls him in the back window, pushes him under the floor and nails him down. I manages to smuggle some grub and uh canteen full uh water from the cook-shack, and eases it under to him.

"The posse's hot on yore trail, ol'-timer," sez I, consolin like. "You better lay plumb still fer uh spell."

"Cripes!" sez he. "How soon do yuh reckon I can git away, Hen?"

Digitized by Google

"I don't know much about law, Muley, but I do know that some debts is outlawed in seven years. Mebby it takes longer to cover uh killin.' "

THAT evenin' me and Telescope plays seven-up in the bunk-house. Telescope feels uh heap bad, out loud, about Muley.

"Pore ol' Muley," he mourns in uh high key. "Play yore jack on that ace, Hen Peck. Do yuh reckon they'll hang him? They say that Sheriff McFee allus gits his man, so there ain't much use uh Muley tryin' to git away. I got high, low and the game. That puts me out. Wonder where pore ol' Muley is tonight, Hen. This will shore break the set. Did yuh ever see uh man hung? "

"Uh-huh," sez I. "They shore kicks hard. What are we goin' to do about the courtin' agreement? This kind uh busts it up, don't it? "

"Shore does," agrees Telescope. "If I had some money I'd go down to see her tonight."

"I ain't got none," I states. "But I got uh good idea, Telescope. Muley thought uh heap uh you, and he allus said that you could have anything he had. I seen Muley put some money in his war-sack yesterday, and I know if he was here he'd let yuh have it in uh minute. Money ain't goin' to do him no good no more, so yuh might as well take it. Here it is, Telescope—thirty-five simoleons." I talks in uh loud tone all the time, and oncet I hears the floor squeak.

"I hates to take it" sez Telescope, puttin' it in his pocket. "But it's jist as you say, Hen—where Muley's goin' they don't use gold, except to pave the streets. I wonder if I hadn't better sell Muley's saddle? I hears Pete Pickett offer Muley fifty dollars fer it uh few days ago. Pete can't git uh tree big enough, and that one jist fits."

"Sell it," I advises. "It would jist dry up and spoil hangin' up here, cause it's too blamed big fer uh ordinary man."

Telescope saddles up and pulls out, and Muley tries to bust through the floor.

"Lay still, yuh animated lard can!" I yells. "Ain't yuh got no sense a-tall, Muley? The sheriff's up at the house."

"Don't let Telescope sell that saddle! " comes in muffled tones through uh knot-hole." I can't never make my getaway in uh small saddle."

"You shut up, Muley!" I advises. "I'm goin' up and see how much the sheriff knows."

I goes up and plays pitch with the ol' man until nidnight.

"Where's the rest uh the Three Disgraces?" he asks.

"Gone to town."

"Well, you might as well stay with me, Hen. No use uh both of us bein' lonesome."

The next mornin' I slips Muley uh li'l breakfast, and he shore is one peevish person.

"Yore uh —— of uh friend!" sez he. "I been keepin' awake all night to hear what the sheriff has to say. Dog-gone yuh, Hen, did yuh ever stop to think that I'm layin' here on my back in the dust? Every time I moves I chokes to death to keep from sneezin.' "

"Muley," sez I, "If yore goin' to be uh outlaw yuh shore got to put up with uh li'l discomfort. I'm lookin' fer the posse to show up any ol' time. The' sheriff was here all night and I shore had uh hard time to keep him away from here."

"This is the last day, Hen," he pronounces. "I'd jist as soon hang as to be buried alive thisaway. Also you got uh lot uh nerve to tell ol' Telescope that he could sell that saddle. Some sweet day I'm——"

"Duck! " I yips in his fat face, as I hears voices outside.

Muley ducks into the dirt and I shoves the nails down with my heels, sets uh chair careless-like over the board, and then occupies the bunk.

Some horses ambles up to the door and in comes two people. In the lead is Sheriff McFee and behind him comes Doughgod Smith.

"Howdy, Hen," sez McFee, settin' down on the other bunk.

Doughgod nods and sets down on the chair.

"How's every li'l thing at the Cross-J?" asks the sheriff, and I informs him that everything is fine as frog hair.

"I'm lookin' fer Muley Bowles," sez McFee.

I hears the bunk-house settle about six inches, and jist then Telescope comes in.

"Hello, Sheriff, greets Telescope, with uh wide grim. What's the good word? "

"So, so, Telescope. Where's Muley?"

"What do yuh want Muley fer?" I asks.

Digitized by Google

McFee looks at Doughgod, and busts out laughin'.

"Haw! Haw! Haw! By cripes! This is dangdest affair I ever went out on. I feel shore that this is the first time that uh man had to take uh sheriff along when he went to pay his debts. Doughgod opines that he's as honest as the day is long, and that he's goin' to pay his honest debts if he has to hire uh posse to back him. Am I right in my statements, Doughgod?"

"To uh gnat's eyelash, Sheriff," agrees Doughgod. "Bein' as I aims to take unto myself uh mate in wedlock next Wednesday night I wants to start even with all men. I owe Muley this forty bucks and I want to pay it to him. Sabe? I shore wants uh receipt, too."

"Who in —— are you goin' to marry?" I asks, surprised-like.

"The new school-ma'am," sez Doughgod, and yuh could fry aigs on his ears. Now about that forty dollars——"

Right under Doughgod the floor seems to rise right up with uh splinterin' crash, and Doughgod sprawls on his face on the floor. Comes uh rippin', tearin' noise, and from the splintered floor emerges Muley. His shirt is tore off, and he's got uh scratch down his face, the same uh which is paintin' him like uh buck Piegan at uh ceremonial wau-wau.

He wabbles there fer uh moment, lookin' us over in uh dazed sort of uh way. Then he reaches over, picks up the astonished Doughgod and kisses him tenderly on the forehead.

"There's yore receipt, Doughgod," sez he. "Keep the forty fer uh weddin' present. It's worth it to see yuh win over Telescope Tolliver."

"Win over—me!" whoops Telescope. "Over you, yuh mean—you or Hen."

"Yore crazy!" yelps Muley." Me and Hen never went near her! We played poker every night jist to give you uh free field."

"Did yuh win?" asks Telescope.

"We did not," I replies, sadly.

"Neither did I," sez Telescope.

We all sets there and looks foolish at each other fer uh spell, and then Telescope snorts—

"Honest to——"

"Doughgod!" sez Muley.

A GAUCHO'S DEFIANCE

(Snatch from Argentina)

By Richard Butler Glaenzer

GAUCHO? Child of the campo? *Si, señor.*
That for the cities' high-hat *caballeros,*
All fuss and feathers like pert *teru-teros!*
For men, long knives and ponchos and sombreros;
Your townsman is a locust—*volador!*

Gaucho? Sharp as the purple thistle's thorn?
Why not! They laugh because we wear *bombachos,*
Laugh though they cannot ride with our *muchachos!*
We are the plains' ax-breaking red *quebrachos*
Which parks of yellow-soft acacias scorn!

Gaucho? Brother of cattle? Ya, of course!
But better a milk-fed calf than *caracara,*
Carrion-fat or sneaking *capivara,*
The river pig, say I, Juan Vergara,
Child of the campo, born three-quarters horse!

Digitized by Google

His Excellency the Vulture

by H. A. Lamb

I

The testimony of Master Thomas Moone, of the ship "Golden Hind," as to the mutinous bearing of Sir James Falconer, leader of her Majesty's gentlemen, in the Great South Sea, in the year 1578. Which explains how the general came to visit the port of Lima, to the great gain of her Majesty, the Queen of England.

MASTER THOMAS MOONE finished reading the day's entry in the log of the *Golden Hind*, written in the hand of the general commanding the expedition to the South Sea. Since Master Moone, although a navigator of rare skill, knew naught of letters and words, he interpreted the entry in the log in his own fashion to the helmsman who was his companion on the quarter deck of the ship.

"A fair wind, an' a fair sea. The coast of the Spanish New World on our quarter. A goodly cargo o' Spanish silver i' the hold. There, I reckon that be all for today."

Moone closed the book carefully.

"Look-ee, lad; you bear too far to sea. Has Spanish silver dazzled you, that you can not see the shore?"

The man addressed, a full-muscled, bronzed seaman, gave over the helm a ways, with a glance at the compass in front of him, then jerked his thumb over his shoulder at a brass culverin that poked its nose from an embrasure on the poop.

"I did naught, Master Thomas Moone," he said stoutly, "but follow the general command, which being inspired by book science and the secret arts of navigation did seem to me more rightly trusted than my eyes, when the shore began to fall away to leeward. For by the chart it does seem true that the land be to nor'west when by my eyes it be to nor'east."

Thomas Moone planted his stocky form beside the cannon and scanned the two hemispheres of the Old and New World which were engraved thereon. Scanty and rude as the details were, they formed the only charts available for the mariners who directed the course of the *Golden Hind*, and by the outline of the chart inscribed on the cannon, Moone saw that the coastline ran slightly to the west, whereas he could plainly see that it tended to the east.

"A fair wind makes a fair sea, 'tis said," went on the helmsman, moodily, "yet here we be with a fair wind as ever blessed the channel, and foul danger lurking nigh us. Have we not come through the curse Straits of Magellan, where a thousand devils send a wind no ship can stand against, when the return trip is to be made? Here we be, a bare hundred men, in one ship in the Great South Sea, with the Spanish men-at-arms watching for us on land, and not a friend

Digitized by Google

to turn to afloat. For food there is but salt penguin meat, and for drink——"

"Good *botijas* of Chili wine, lad," roared Moone, "with silks from Cathay, taken from the galleons, for cloth, and bars of silver for ballast."

"What good avail these, when the charts are evil, and we know not the lay of the rocks along the coast? How may we return to England?"

"By the devil's back-door, if needful," retorted Moone. "Our good general will discover some path, 'tis safe to venture. That is, if the tender-skinned and silken-clothed gentlemen in the cabin beneath us will cease their mutterings against him, for the reason that he, a sailor, is in command over them. Where should a sailor command, if not on the deck of his ship?"

A sound from the waist of the ship caught Moone's quick ear, and he thrust his red face into that of the helmsman.

"Hold your tongue, lad," he whispered hoarsely, "concerning what we've said, an ye fear my fist, for here comes the general himself, and the leader of the queen's gentlemen, Sir James Falconer."

Whereupon, with a poke of a knotty finger in the helmsman's ribs to enforce his words Master Moone betook himself to the rail of the poop, and, leaning on the brass cannon, pretended to be interested in the coat-of-arms painted on the stern which bore the insignia of Elizabeth, Queen of England, although really his ear was cocked to what went on behind him.

Two men stepped from the ladder to the poop, one tall and yellow of hair, the other stocky and ruddy of cheeks. Both were bearded in the fashion of the day, and elegantly clad, with plumes in their hats, and satin cloaks over their shoulders, and silver ornaments on belt and shoes.

The tall man, more carefully dressed than his companion, was Sir James Falconer, the other was the general of the expedition, Mr. Francis Drake. His short figure was alert and powerful, and his eyes flickered rapidly over the poop, while he played carelessly with the sword at his belt—the arm as finely tempered as the steel blade.

While Sir James leaned indolently against the rail and watched, the general produced a telescope and scanned the shore ahead of them for several moments.

"Beyond the next headland, Sir James," he observed after a pause, "must lie the port of Arica for which we search. Then we shall see whether our hosts, the Spaniards, have prepared more treasure craft for us to have the spoiling of! How like you the thought of more silver bars?"

"More like they have carried off all the riches of the town to the woods," objected the soldier, with a shrug. "Word of our coming has outspeeded the *Golden Hind* up the coast, and robbed us of our booty. If this be truly the port of Arica, we had best land and search the town, for the shipping will be bare of silver."

"Not so, Sir James," replied Drake, putting down the telescope, "if you venture ashore 'twill be short shrift the Dons will give you. At sea, we are safe; ashore our enemies outnumber us, an' they are plagued treacherous."

"Bah! one Englishman can fight twenty Spaniards. And as for trickery, I am not the man to be caught asleep. A sailor's heart clings to his ship and ordnance, but a soldier has a love for battle—a smoking pistol and a flashing blade."

There was more than a little contempt in the voice of the leader of the queen's gentlemen. Drake he considered to be an excellent pilot, and a worthy handler of sails and cordage, but Sir James had never admitted that Drake held rank over himself. All sailors were upstarts, a breed scarce better than laborers.

The general cast a keen glance at his second in command. It might have been seen that there were lines of weariness on the brow over the sharp eyes and sunburnt cheeks. The months since leaving Plymouth had been full of trouble—losses among the men at the hands of Indians, a vessel lost to sight in Magellan Straits, another gone down with all hands at the same spot, and lack of good provisions beyond what they could take from the Spanish towns. Greater than all these in the general's mind was the mutinous spirit of Sir James and his gentlemen.

ALONE in the Great South Sea, surrounded by Spanish craft, with the way of return by the straits well-nigh cut off by the enemy, and the way to China an unknown path, the plight of the *Golden Hind* was little short of desperate. And now the band of men on the ship was divided, the mariners in one faction, in the

Digitized by Google

other the soft-handed gentlemen who had sailed to cross swords with the cavaliers of Spain for the glory of God and to win gold ducats for themselves.

Patiently, Drake had made every effort to mend the breach, only to see it grow until the two factions were on the point of drawing sword to settle the question of leadership.

"Several years agone," said Drake calmly, "my adventure, in attacking Nombre de Dios, in Panama, and carrying off a rich treasure in silver aroused the anger of his Excellency, the Viceroy of Mexico, who swore that if I showed myself within Spanish waters again I should be taken and dealt with as a pirate. Which meant that my head would hang in one of his Excellency's ropes.

"When word of this oath was brought to my ears, I swore likewise that I should return, and make my way to the South Sea where I should exact toll from his Excellency. I have carried out my vow, in the name of our sovereign lady, the queen, but I intend to give his Excellency no chance to make good his oath. Unless there is need, neither I nor my men shall set foot ashore."

"If our general," purred the smooth voice of the yellow-haired Falconer, "would fain be pent ashore for fear of the Spaniard, I will lead my men ashore and give the Dons a taste of English steel and powder. After all, it is the good blood that wields the blade; the mongrel ever snaps and snarls but flees the combat."

The general's bronzed cheeks flushed. He made no movement, but shot a warning glance at Thomas Moone whose mottled face was black with anger.

"Not so, Sir James," he corrected, "for fighting blood knows no coat-of-arms."

"Aye, in men-at-arms. It is the leaders who own the mark of nobility, such as—" Falconer bowed ceremoniously—"your pardon, General, I remembered not you lacked a coat-of-arms."

"Your memory mistakes, Sir James," said Drake quickly, "for I have a coat-of-arms."

"Of honorable name? The crest is ancient?"

"As the world, Sir James. It is here."

Drake placed his hand on the breech of the brass culverin wherein was engraved the twin hemispheres of the world, not unlike armorial bearings. Thomas Moone grinned broadly and shot a glance at the soldier.

"And your commission as general?"

A smile twisted the soft mustache of Falconer. He knew the queen had given Drake no written commission, owing to fear of the Spanish monarch.

"Here!"

Drake drew his sword.

"This is my commission, blessed by the queen herself, who declared the man accursed who should betray it. She gave it me with her own hand."

Sir James smiled and drew his blade with a flourish.

"A worthy commission!" he cried, "in the hand of a man who is not worthy. Would it not be better to surrender it to one who could use it?"

"God's life!" swore Drake who had reached the limit of his patience.

At that instant the burly figure of Thomas Moone stepped between them.

"Lookee, masters," he growled, "an ill time to quarrel when a rich port lies open to our hand, and the Spaniards are making away with all their silver. It lies there, on the starboard bow."

"Arica!" cried Drake.

Both men wheeled and scanned the harbor. The *Golden Hind* had already been seen, and the crews of the vessels anchored in the bay were pulling ashore in small boats. Few people were to be seen in the town itself which consisted of no more than a score or more buildings grouped together a little ways from the shore.

If the *Golden Hind* was not to lose all the advantage of surprise in appearing suddenly before the town, the English would need to act at once. Falconer knew this as well as Drake, and both sheathed their swords. The soldier laughed light-heartedly, but the general's ruddy countenance was aflame with anger.

"Think not, Sir James," he said, "that you escape settlement because you lead a party ashore to take the silver from the Spanish vessels. The moment you set foot on this ship you shall be tried in the name of her Majesty, on charges of treason and mutiny, for you drew sword against me. Go, now, and lose no time about your business!"

Already a boatswain, several sailors and a score of musketeers, with a dozen gentle-

Digitized by Google

men, thronged the waist of the ship, while the great boat was dragged up from its position astern of the ship. At a signal from Drake the helmsman prepared to bring her head to the wind. Sir James, with a glance ashore at the deserted shipping and town, leaped from the poop to the waist of the ship, to be greeted by a shout of acclaim from his men.

THERE was cause for the eagerness of the English to set foot in Arica. Inland from the port were the great mines of Potosi, and from Arica the treasure-ships bearing silver to Panama set out. They had heard from Spanish captives that it was time for the *Santa Maria*, a ship carrying the annual tax of silver of King Philip of Spain, to leave Arica, and they hoped to catch it in the act of loading.

Such a vessel would be a prize richer than any they had taken. Its value would be inestimable in poverty-stricken England. To capture the treasure ship of the king of Spain was a feat that warmed the hearts of the men on the *Golden Hind*, and those who had not gone ashore with Falconer sought points of vantage along the deck of the vessel to watch what passed in the town.

On the quarter-deck Master Moone stood alone with the helmsman, the telescope glued to his eye. Drake had gone below to his cabin, troubled by the scene with his second in command. As the day was clear and the telescope of good quality Moone could make out plainly what his companions in the great boat were doing.

They had landed where the half-dozen ships were moored, and the soldiers swarmed over the craft. Shortly, they appeared on deck again and Moone swore his disgust, for he could guess that no silver was to be had from the galleons in the harbor of Arica.

Again, thought Moone, the Spaniards, warned of their coming, had managed to make away with their riches in time. Probably the *Santa Maria* had sailed some time before, leaving the port barren of silver.

Suddenly Moone gave a whistle of surprise, and gripped the telescope tightly to his eye. Disappointed in finding nothing in the ships, the English boat had pulled to shore, where the soldiers, with Sir James Falconer at their head, entered the town.

At first everything was quiet in the streets of Arica, without a trace of living Spaniard. In landing, Falconer had broken Drake's command. The general had ordered that no one was to go ashore when he himself was not with the expedition. But his superior's caution chafed on the leader of the soldiers, and this was heightened by the quarrel on the poop of the *Golden Hind*, and by disappointment at losing the *Santa Maria*. The town appeared to be deserted, and this confirmed Falconer in his determination to land and wrest some spoil from the buildings.

What had attracted Moone's attention was a movement in a wood at one side of the town, near the shore. He caught the glint of steel through the trees, and in a moment the cause was plain to view. A troop of Spanish cavalry, ambushed in the wood, trotted out into the open and started at a rapid pace for the town.

So intent were the party in Arica on searching the houses that they did not see the advancing line of horsemen until the latter were half-way to the town. Then it was too late to gain the boat in safety. Moone cursed under his breath as he saw this, then gave vent to a grunt of approval. The soldiers under the orders of Falconer greeted the cavalry with a hot fire from their arquebuses, so hot that the wave of horsemen split in two and rolled around the town, giving the little body of Englishmen a wide berth.

But meanwhile other bodies of Spaniards appeared on the hills above the town, while tiny puffs of white showed Moone where their arquebuses were searching the streets of Arica. Several Englishmen dropped under the fire, and more were lost in the retreat back to the boat.

Not all escaped from the town. Sir James with three companions were quitting the place after their companions by one of the side streets, when they were pursued and cut off by a troop of horsemen. For a moment Moone saw the blade of Sir James flashing in his long arm, until a blow from a pike disarmed him and he and his men were made prisoners by the Spaniards.

NO ILL place was the cabin of Mr. Francis Drake. The panes in the square port-holes were of good English stained glass, the beams that supported the deck overhead were curiously carved,

Digitized by Google

and Flemish tapestries hung from the walls. A ladder in one corner led to the poop, while a small door at one side gave into the general's sleeping quarters.

Following the ill-omened landing of his men, Drake was seated in his shirt-sleeves on a bench that ran beneath the ports, stroking a violin softly. His sword was thrown carelessly on the small table by his side. Idle and light-hearted as he appeared, Thomas Moone, who had sailed with him on many voyages, noted the line of care drawn across the brown forehead, and the pain back of the searching eyes. Moone was seated by his leader, without formality, as was their custom.

Wrinkling his nose in disgust, the sailing-master spat out of an open port.

"Good riddance it be, sir," he growled, "for Sir James was ever of mutinous mind. If the Spanish dog hang him to yardarm, 'twill be but cheating us of the pleasure. Pah! silk-coated vermin!"

"The man is brave, Tom," mused the general, "and he was outspoken. Nevertheless he did breed mutiny and treason among our people, and if he lives, he shall answer for it. Tell me again the words of the Spanish leader at Arica."

"I heard them not," explained the sailor, "those who came off in the great boat say that one of the Dons on horseback came within earshot on the shore as they were pulling away. He cried to them in Spanish, which several of the company knew—

" 'Tell your corsair chief that his men shall be tried and hung at Lima, and his Excellency bids him come and attend the trial.' "

Drake threw back his head and laughed long.

"So the Vulture invites us to come to his lair, Tom. What think you, man—shall we do as he bids?"

"Ar't not serious, sir? No doubt but his Excellency would gladly welcome us—ha! he'll see little of us save good cannon-shot. Yet why put in at Lima when the treasure ship sails north to escape us? We may overtake it, for we have the legs of the Spanish craft."

"How long since did the *Santa Maria* put to sea, Tom?"

"Three days agone, sir. It would be a simple matter to make up the time."

"Too simple, for the Spanish trust cunning where they fear sails."

Drake plucked at the violin strings thoughtfully.

"Nay, the *Santa Maria* will not be found where we look for it. But we will find it, by my faith, Tom. The Spaniards shall pay for their treatment of Sir James Falconer. He is an Englishman. Since when have Englishmen been taken at sight as pirates? The man offended but with his sword—a good blade."

"He is foul with mutiny."

"Then shall he be tried on the *Golden Hind* in the queen's name. Nay, no other than his general will try him. His Excellency, the Vulture, will find his prisoners slipped through his claws, and the black lepers of the Inquisition will lose their prey."

The honest mariner scratched his head thoughtfully and sighed.

"How may that be, sir? Sir James travels overland in the hands of many armed caballeros of Spain, who take him to the presence of the viceroy at the great town of Lima, where are no less than three thousand soldiers, as I have heard, and many cannon. Were the viceroy afloat we might lay him aboard with a good heart. Ashore, we be a scant ninety men against three thousand. How could we land, in the face of such odds?"

"The task is beyond us, Tom," smiled the general. "Our boats could never put ashore in the town held by such number of soldiers."

" 'Twere madness to think on't sir. Besides, there is the treasure ship that flees us. We can not squander time in trying to barter for the lives of the mutineers at Lima."

"No silver shall buy the lives of Sir James Falconer and his men," declared the general. "Yet they shall stand free——"

"But how, in God's name——"

The general ran the fiddle bow caressingly over the strings.

"When Sir James went to the port of Arica he carried in a pocket of his cloak a letter to the viceroy, written in an excellent conceit, in goodly Spanish——"

"The traitor!"

"Nay, you wrong him. The letter was from my hand. Perchance your Spanish caballero on horseback opened it when Sir James was made prisoner, and made answer as he did. For my letter was word that I was coming to pay the viceroy a call in

Digitized by Google

person at his palace. Now that he bids me, by his caballero to come to the trial, I shall pay my respects——"

"With good cannon shot and powder!"

Drake put down his violin and smiled at Moone.

"At the court of justice," he amended.

II

The testimony of one Fray Raymundo of Lima, as to the events connected with the visit of the notorious corsair El Francisco Andreque to that town, as forwarded to his Majesty, King Philip the Second of Spain, upon occasion of the inquiry into the most strange circumstances that did there befall his Excellency the Governor of Peru.

WHEN the shadows lengthened along the plaza of El Callao de Lima, a certain Fray Raymundo emerged from the doors of his church. On the threshold he paused to gaze at the unwonted activity of the plaza.

Silk banners hung from the windows facing the square. Along the streets leading to it trotted mounted caballeros, their accouterments bright with silver and jewels. From the windows and balconies veiled women did not scorn to show their pretty heads, and their dresses which were of the costliest material and workmanship. By the side of the women, often mestizos, or half-breeds, loitered Spaniards who had been poorer than the soldiers in the streets a year ago, and now owned silver enough to buy them a dukedom in Spain.

The soldiers themselves had pockets filled with gold and silver which they squandered in the shops for a *botija* of wine or a throw at the dice. Shouts, songs and laughter echoed from wine-shop to wine-shop through the streets. Money was theirs to spend as they wished, for more was to be had from the mines worked by the enslaved natives, and the occasion was gala.

As he saw the holiday throng, Fray Raymundo remembered that it was the last day of the trial of the four Lutheran dogs who had been taken by the caballeros of Arica. Moreover the English corsair was somewhere off the coast, and rumor said that the corsair captain, El Francisco Andreque, had boasted that he would land and meet his Excellency the Governor face to face. Nothing had been seen of the devil ship, as it was called, but every preparation had been made to welcome it fittingly if it should have the insolence to come to the port of El Callao de Lima.

Into the crowd that had moved along the plaza to the Royal Audencia where the trial was taking place pressed Fray Raymundo, while the soldiers, adventurers and women made way respectfully before his gray robe and pale face. It was his purpose to reach the Royal Audencia in time to see the arrival of the viceroy, and in this he was successful.

Just as the last rays of the sun were touching the silk hangings in the windows, and glittering on the silver trees and ornaments that stood in front of the houses, there was a stir in the throng that filled the plaza, and the governor was seen advancing to the Audencia where the court waited his presence, in company with several of his captains and advisors.

The Most Excellent Lord, Don Francisco de Toledo, Viceroy, Governor, and Captain-General of the Spanish realms in the New World, was no less a monarch in America than was King Phillip II., ruler of Spain, Portugal and Flanders, in the Old World. The gold cloth and velvet of his attire, the emerald clasp that held in place his black cloak, made the appearance of his Excellency no less splendid that that of the Incas who had fallen under his rule.

With the power of the Inquisition which knew no laws at his command, a conquered race enchained to do his bidding, and the mines of the New World at hand to yield enormous riches, there was little wonder that his Excellency's pride matched that of the only man who could call him servant.

As he pushed through the crowd his Excellency's dark eyes held recognition for few he met—a distinguished captain of cavalry, a wealthy owner of one of the Potosi mines, a brilliantly dressed woman of his court. The native chiefs who, catching the spirit of the celebration, appeared in the streets in the splendor of their state garments, the governor ignored completely. Fray Raymundo, who had reached a point quite near the path of his Excellency was about to bow, in company with others around him, when something arrested him.

An Indian, who had entered the plaza from one of the streets leading directly to the hills behind the town, ran to the governor and prostrated himself.

Digitized by Google

"A message, oh, chief of chiefs," he cried, in Quichua.

Those who were watching the scene saw the governor, before the Indian could speak again, place a foot on the brown, muscled back lying before him. Then his Excellency, well content, wiped his shoes on the Indian and passed on to the Audencia.

A shout of laughter greeted this display of amiability on the part of the governor, and a few curious glances were cast at the native, who picked himself up with a scowl and vanished in the crowd, but not before Fray Raymundo had recognized him as a friendly Indian from a tribe which was hostile to the Spanish rule. Anxious to learn the cause of the man's act, the priest pushed after him.

The Indian did not linger in the plaza which had been the scene of his disgrace, but entered one of the side streets. The priest was close enough to see him disappear into one of the wine-shops. When he stepped into the place, which was filled with half-caste mine workers, drunken sailors and Peruvians, he found the native he sought in company with several of his tribe, drinking heavily.

To the priest's civil question about his message the man would make no answer beyond a sullen stare, and a gesture that revealed the mark of his Excellency's feet on his back. Troubled by the occurrence—for he knew the native to be friendly to the Spaniards—Fray Raymundo was leaving the wine-shop when a half-caste nudged his elbow and whispered hurriedly in his ear.

"I can tell you the man's message, Fray," muttered the other, rum thick on his breath. "He says he has seen the devil ship along the coast. There is more that he knows, but the man is angered and will not spit it out until good wine loosens his tongue."

"The corsair!" exclaimed the fray. "That is news for his Excellency."

"His Excellency is too ready with his feet, Fray," retorted the half-caste.

"That is a pity. Still, he should know. I will go to the Audencia. Do you stay by the Indian until he speaks further, and then seek me out at the trial."

With a gesture of benediction the priest gathered up his robe and turned away. He reflected that the Indian might have been mistaken, and determined to proceed cautiously in relating what he had heard to the authorities. Once more the priest made his way across the plaza, now shrouded in dusk.

Torches in every street scattered the gloom in Lima, and especially along the water-front every detail of the moving groups of mail-clad soldiers, the whispering Indians in their holiday purple and gold could be seen. Fray Raymundo breathed deep of the fresh night air, and noted with approval that armed forces were guarding the town on each of the roads leading to it and at the shore, where cannon had been stationed to await the expected coming of the corsair that had visited Arica.

The priest was no believer in steel and cannon to inflict pain on men, but he briefly blessed the hardy soldiers with the gallant captains who made safe the port of Lima from the Lutheran pirate who had stripped the altar cloth from the church of Arica, to give, so the prisoners had declared at the trial, a suitable cloth to their own outlaw priest.

So great was the crowd at the doors of the Audencia that the good fray was able only by persistent effort and frequent requests to allow him to pass, to make his way to where he could command a view of the interior.

At the end of the room farthest from the door sat his Excellency, wearing his customary black cloak, and black velvet cap, with a white ruffle at the throat. On one side stood several of his captains, bronzed, swaggering caballeros who were veterans of jungle warfare. At the other side were grouped the servants of the Inquisition, black-robed slaves of his Excellency. At a long table near these priests sat several scribes who were making note of the proceedings, for the records were to be sent to Spain with the tax of silver in the *Santa Maria*.

In the cleared space before the governor stood the prisoners, stripped of their arms and accouterments, under guard of halberdiers. They had been brought forth to listen to the conclusion of the trial. Even now, Fray Raymundo heard one of the clerks of the court reading the indictment against the prisoners.

"WHEREBY it does appear," the high voice of the clerk reached his ears, "that these four men be servants of this Francisco Andreque who is no other than a heretic, offending against the grace of his Majesty and his Excellency, the Viceroy of Peru and Mexico. And it is not

Digitized by Google

less certain that they did land at Arica, despoiling the town and defiling the church of most fair vestments, according to their custom, when taken by our brave soldiers of Arica. And this is but one of their insolences whereby it does appear that the English dogs are pirates of the lowest order."

A buzz of excitement circulated in the crowd. The pallid faces of the followers of the Inquisition gleamed, and beautiful mestizos raised inquiring glances to their attendant caballeros. Only the governor made no sign.

"It is the just opinion of the court," Fray Raymundo heard the clerk conclude, "that the English prisoners be chastised in the way most fitting to their crime, by order of his Excellency, Don Francisco de Toledo, Governor of Peru."

Before the governor could speak a tall figure stepped before him, and the priest recognized the man who had been pointed out to him as the leader of the English.

"Would you condemn a soldier to the fate of a villain, señor?" said this man in halting Spanish. "My faith, that were a crime greater than aught we are charged with. Did you not take us prisoner in fair fight?"

The black head of the governor bent slightly, while a smile curled his thin mouth.

"I will hear what you have to say, Señor Falconer. Yet it does not bear the ring of truth to me that you claim to be honorable prisoners of war, when you were taken in act of plunder and lawless despite."

Fray Raymundo was swept nearer the governor's seat by the eager crowd which pushed and jostled to catch what was said. Seldom had such an attraction offered, for in one day there was rumor of the presence of the corsair off the coast who had promised in writing to pay a visit to no less a person than his Excellency himself, and four of the English dogs were to be executed. Surely, the Englishman was foolhardy who dared to match words with the governor.

"It is true that I did take some silver vessels and altar cloth from the church," admitted Falconer bluffly, "but they were for the use of Master Fletcher, our minister, who lacked such things. As for plunder, we took nothing from the coast but silver bars and the cargoes of certain ships. No vessel did we sink with men aboard."

"Señor," said the governor, and the priests of the Inquisition nodded assent, "that were a greater offense than to rob the church for gain. Do you pretend that you came not here of your own will, being pirates in the truest sense, since our countries are not at war?"

"We came," replied Falconer quickly, "in the service of the queen, our sovereign lady, who bade us find a passage to the South Sea, an we could. Our orders were to take toll of the silver that flows from here to Spain and enriches our enemies."

"Yet, señor," repeated the governor with a hard smile, "you came to Spanish waters and took toll of Spanish ships, a dishonorable voyage——"

"An honorable voyage, señor," retorted Falconer, shaking his yellow head, "at her Highness's command. The silver we take is not for us, but for our country. Spanish silver, forsooth! Wrested, rather, from the people of the New World by despite. Show me the will of Adam which gave the world to Spain, and I will say that we are pirates!"

"You grow scurrilous, señor," answered the governor coldly. "And you blaspheme without shame in speaking thus of holy matters. An you desire proof of your crimes, I have it here, taken from your person the day you were made prisoner at Arica."

He produced a roll of parchment from under his cloak and tapped it against his knee.

"This was given me by a worthy captain who found it in your belt. It is in the hand of your master, the corsair chief, who declares that he is coming to Lima to pull my beard for me, and to take what jewels he may. Call you that the letter of a gentleman?"

"My faith," muttered Falconer, "I knew not the contents of the letter. I was told to leave it in the town where it would be found. 'Tis like my general, in truth——"

"Enough of this," commanded the governor. "Is there aught to be said relating to the trial?"

Fray Raymundo considered the opportunity good to tell what he had heard about the English ship being sighted near the port. He edged forward to the front of the crowd. As he did so, he was conscious of another pushing in his tracks, and as he raised his hand for attention, this other stepped past him to the clear space before the governor. And Fray Raymundo saw a strange thing.

The newcomer, in spite of the purple robe

Digitized by Google

tucked about him, was the native who had prostrated himself before the governor in the plaza and endured the humiliation of his Excellency's foot. The priest thought he caught a gleam of hate in the Indian's eyes, and a brown hand slipped from a fold in the robe.

But the Indian held out nothing more than a slip of parchment to his Excellency, who recognized him not, as he had not seen his face before. All eyes were on the governor as he tore open the parchment and scanned the contents of the letter. As he did so his pale face flushed and the blue veins showed in his forehead.

"What deviltry is this!" he snapped, glaring at the Indian. "A letter, señors, from the pirate chief who says that he is coming to the trial in person this night, and that if a finger of his men be touched before he comes, two thousand Spaniards shall die!"

A silence of amazement fell on the crowd. A laugh rose from a few throats, then stifled. Who was this corsair, to say he would come to Lima through two thousand soldiers and a score of cannon, and to the presence of his Excellency, who, as was well known, had vowed the death of El Francisco Andreque should the latter ever come within reach? Fray Raymundo crossed himself as he thought of the captured towns further down the coast and the ravaged shipping. Surely El Andreque had concourse with the devil, no less!

He caught a few words of the governor, as the latter spoke in a low tone to his captains.

"Where got you the letter?" demanded one of the soldiers of the Indian.

"Chief, I found it upon a table at an inn in the town," muttered the native.

The captain shrugged his shoulders, and the Indian seized the chance to slip out through the crowd. As he did so, Fray Raymundo saw him shoot a venomous glance over his shoulder at the governor.

". . . lights the entire water-front," one of the soldiers was saying. "No one could land from a vessel without being seen. To make doubly sure, we have ordered all the crews ashore, but some watchmen, from the sixteen vessels at anchor. Another is expected tonight, from Panama. The harbor is quiet, and patrols of the custom-house are out in small boats. Nothing is reported."

"The roads leading to Lima?" inquired the governor sharply.

"All guarded by men with torches, your Excellency."

"The streets?"

"Are patrolled and quiet, your Excellency. Two thousand men bear arms tonight in your service, and were El Andreque the devil himself he could not invade Lima now. His ship would be seen entering the harbor."

"Yet he sends me this missive," mused the governor. "It is, in truth, in the same hand as the other."

"A bit of bravado, your Excellency. The English dog barks out of fear, not bravery."

Without warning the governor tore the parchment in two and stamped the pieces underfoot. His face twisted into a pale mask of rage.

"Fools, idiots!" he snarled, "the man is here in town. Look," he held up one hand which was stained with black spots, "the ink upon the parchment is not yet dry!"

The thick ink was in truth still wet upon the parchment, which had not been sanded —the Indian could have received it but a short time before.

WHAT came to pass within the next hour occurred with such swiftness that the good fray scarce had time to cross himself and mutter a prayer as protection against the black art which brought the letter to the hand of his Excellency.

Stooping over, he picked up one of the pieces of parchment, and found that the governor had spoken truly when he said the ink was still wet. The parchment had not been sanded, and when the fray rubbed one of his fingers against it, it made a dark smear. The writing must have been done, thought the priest, within the quarter hour. If so, and if it was truly by the hand of the corsair, El Andreque must be now within the limits of the town.

There was little doubt that the soldiers dispatched by the governor on the instant would take their quarry prisoner, in a search of the town. All trace of the Indian in the purple robe who had brought the letter had disappeared.

Swift questions by his Excellency of the captains and custom-house officials made clear the following facts. No man had landed from the shipping in the harbor—seventeen vessels, now that the ship from Panama had been seen to enter the port. No one save some natives from the mine

Digitized by Google

had passed the guards on the roads since nightfall. The soldiers had not observed any strangers in the streets. If El Andreque was in hiding in the town, he must be in the residence of one of the inhabitants.

The priest thought otherwise. To him a man who accomplished the deeds of the corsair was without doubt in league with Satan. What followed upon the words of the governor convinced him of the truth of his belief. For a miracle, to the mind of the fray, was reported by the custom-house officer who burst into the Audencia with a drawn sword and eyes wide with amazement of what he had to tell.

"The harbor!" snapped the governor. "What is toward?"

"The ships are drifting out to sea, your Excellency," cried the man. "They have slipped their cables! Name of the devil, it is witchcraft. In spite of the watchers we left on the galleons, they are loose from their moorings and drifting away from the town like frightened sheep."

"Send out small boats and work them back to anchorage," commanded the governor. "Has a wind sprung up of a sudden?"

"No, your Excellency, there is little air stirring. The ships seem to be moving out of their own accord. All the seventeen are in motion. It is clear starlight, and we can see them passing well from the shore."

The governor gestured angrily for silence and whispered to one of his captains who started and clapped hand to his sword. Slowly at first the buzz of whispered tidings spread around the hall. To Fray Raymundo the rumor came as he was repeating his prayer against heretic black arts. The corsair was in the harbor! What the guards had taken to be the vessel from Panama was no other than the devil ship of El Andreque. It had slipped in among the other vessels and begun its work of evil unnoticed.

It was now too late for the priest to tell his tidings, and he stepped back from his position before the governor to seek the harbor and learn the truth of what was happening. He had scarce taken a step when the buzz of whispers in the hall were broken by the sound of a cannon in the harbor. And when the echo had died away, no one spoke. The priest went no further toward the door.

For he saw, quite clearly by the torches held by the halberdiers at the entrance, three Englishmen walk into the Audencia, and advance through the crowd toward the governor. The leader of the trio was a stocky man with red cheeks and a fair beard, and eyes that seemed to take in everything in the hall with a single glance. Behind him came two tall gentlemen who curled their beards and cast sidelong glances at the mestizos.

The unexpectedness of their entrance cleared the way for the Englishmen, when the halberdiers stopped them in the open space before the governor. The leader of the English prisoners, Falconer, gave a cry of surprise which was drowned in the uproar of the crowd.

Soldiers, officials and populace, once they were sure that no more of the English dogs were in the street, gazed open-mouthed at the trio who stood calmly in the midst of the Audencia. Although armed, their weapons were sheathed, and they showed no disposition to use them. Above the confusion the voice of the English leader reached the ears of Fray Raymundo.

"I have come, señor," he began, in very fair Spanish, "to pay you a promised visit, and to see that my men whom you hold prisoners, are released without ado."

NOT until then did Fray Raymundo realize that before him stood the notorious El Andreque, corsair and heretic. Surely, he thought, the man was stricken with madness to come to the trial as he had done, with two companions and swords sheathed.

Only by a slight lift of the eyebrows did that astute personage, his Excellency Don Francisco de Toledo, show his astonishment and gratification.

"You come at an excellent time, Señor Andreque," he responded, his mouth twitching into a smile, "for we were sitting in judgment upon other pirates and robbers of your breed. Now it will be possible to hang seven instead of four. You remember the vow that I made after your sack of Nombre de Dios? Tomorrow it will cease to be a vow, because its purpose will be fulfilled."

El Andreque swept off his hat in a bow which would not have discredited a Spanish courtier.

"I also made a vow, señor," he said in his hearty voice, "that goads me to fulfilment. I have sworn that I would make my way to the waters of the South Sea, if I

Digitized by Google

lived, and I have done so. Even have I come to your court, which, I am told, is the second richest in the world."

"As you may see," the governor swept his hand gracefully around the room, while a slight frown crossed his brow as he considered the English captain. "Yet tomorrow, I regret, señor, that you will not see it, for vultures will be pecking at your eyes, and your body will hang upon our gibbet."

Whereupon Fray Raymundo saw Falconer start forward as if to speak, being checked by a quick word from El Andreque. The two spoke together in English briefly, while his Excellency's glance wandered from one to the other and darkened when Falconer threw back his yellow head in a hearty laugh.

"You will not laugh," he said harshly, "when your bones crack in the grip of the rack tomorrow. Enough of this play, my men will see that you have good entertainment in irons and shackles. How came you here?"

"Through the courtesy of an Indian, señor," returned the visitor calmly, "who met us when we landed on the shore further south, where we learned from a tribe hostile to you that the trial was to be ended tonight, with other things. We encountered this same Indian at the outskirts of Lima, and he consented to smuggle us into an inn where the patrons were so deep in wine, they would not have noticed had we been Neptune himself. It was there I wrote my letter a few minutes ago to advise you of my coming."

Fray Raymundo's thoughts flew to the native who had been insulted by the govenor. He might well have come to the town to inform the Spaniards of the arrival of the English, being friendly to them before his encounter with the governor. After that, with a Peruvian's deep hatred of injury, he had lent his aid to El Andreque. If the priest had been able to make friends with the Indian in the tavern, different events might have followed. But God, he considered, had willed otherwise.

Meanwhile El Andreque had stepped to the side of Falconer, and drawn his sword to cut the cords which bound him, when two Spanish soldiers grasped him. At once he turned to the governor.

"Release me, señor," he cried, "and my companions, including the prisoners. God's truth, they are worthless mutineers, but they are Englishmen, and such shall not hang from a gibbet. Give us a guard of safe conduct down to the water-front, with a pinnace to leave the shore, in order to reach our ship."

"Rather a safe conduct to the devil and a pinnace to sail in purgatory, señor," retorted the governor. "I have no mind to release you herehence, save in that fashion."

"An you do that," warned El Andreque, "all Lima will grieve, and your life as govnor will have short shrift."

"How mean you?" questioned his Excellency, biting his beard, for he saw that there was something held back in the words of the Englishman. Yet he was surrounded by two thousand men with swords in their hands, and the corsair was distant from the town by the length of the harbor. Surely, there could be no danger from the English. The man's words were bred of madness.

El Andreque waved his hand goodnaturedly.

"An you would know how matters stand," he said, "conceive that my ship has cut your craft from their moorings, and now sixteen sail are in our hands, drifted by the wind, out of the harbor. Not a vessel of size remains on the water-front of Lima. An you see not what this means, conceive that without ships you can not reach another port, nor will other craft come to you, for we shall take and sink those that we meet up the coast. Lima will be barred from the rest of the world by the loss of sixteen sail, if we are not returned unharmed to my ship by dawn."

There was a stir at these words, and Fray Raymundo saw the governor's hands writhe together in anger.

"Dog!" shouted his Excellency. "Think you to deceive me with a threat? Your life will need a greater price than that. What if Lima is cut off from the outside for months? We can live. Better that than to surrender to you on such terms."

"A higher price?" smiled El Andreque. "Well, I will be generous, and give it you. The *Santa Maria*, with the king's treasure is with the other ships in port, as I learned from the Indians. She is, in truth, in our hands. How like you the thought of losing the king's tax?"

The priest saw how heavy these tidings lay on his Excellency, for the *Santa Maria* was loaded with thousands of bars of silver. For a moment there was silence in the

Digitized by Google

Audencia while the governor stared at the Englishman, and the hands of the Spanish captains itched to the swords they feared to use.

"THE GUN you heard," went on El Andreque, "was a signal to me that my ship had done what I planned. The guards of your vessels —too few, forsooth—were crowded into one galleon, and all the cables were cut. The forts on shore are helpless. They can not see one ship from another in the darkness. In the hands of my men there is a ransom for a dozen dukes, the price of a kingdom."

His Excellency winced and shot a black look at the unfortunate customs guards.

"Our ransom, the sixteen ships, including the *Santa Maria*," resumed El Andreque carelessly, "will be paid, on my word, when we reach our ship. Otherwise, you will not see the ships again, and the *Santa Maria* will make the trip to England as a present to our sovereign lady, the queen. By my faith, King Philip will reward you well when he hears how his tax slipped through your fingers, señor."

There was a murmur of agreement from the crowd who knew the value of the cargo of the galleon, but his Excellency bared his teeth in rage.

"Your word!" he snarled. "The word of a pirate and thief—how can I know it will be kept?"

"My faith," answered the Englishman, and Fray Raymundo marveled to see him smile, as at a good jest. "I have kept the vow I swore at Nombre de Dios, while your's has slight chance of honor. Am I not a man of my word?"

"Your life lies in my hand."

"Slight avail would it be to you, señor, if you lose all your shipping. Ships are uneasy to make from the trees on this coast, and none come from Spain."

"I could send a thousand men out in small boats to take your ship under cover of darkness. What is to prevent?"

"Naught save that there are no small boats. Pinnace and cockboat alike have been stove in by my men, save a half-dozen that lay on the shore."

"The forts can fire on all the shipping in the harbor. Perchance——"

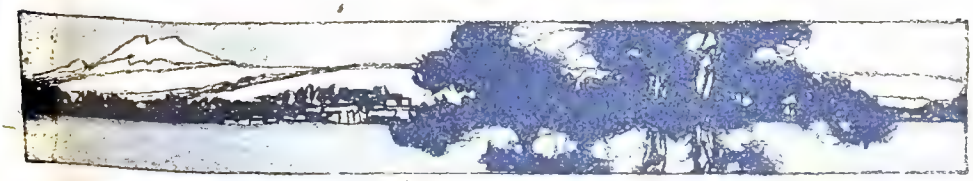
"The first ship to be sunk would be the *Santa Maria*, señor."

And Fray Raymundo knew that the governor could do naught but yield his prisoners safe conduct. There were some words between the caballeros, who found the remedy not to their liking, but his Excellency waved them to silence and ordered the guards to take the English to the shore and put them in a small boat. When the tall Falconer bowed before his Excellency and said—

"I warrant your Excellency's beard is chaffed to a turn, and as for your jewels, you will know more presently."

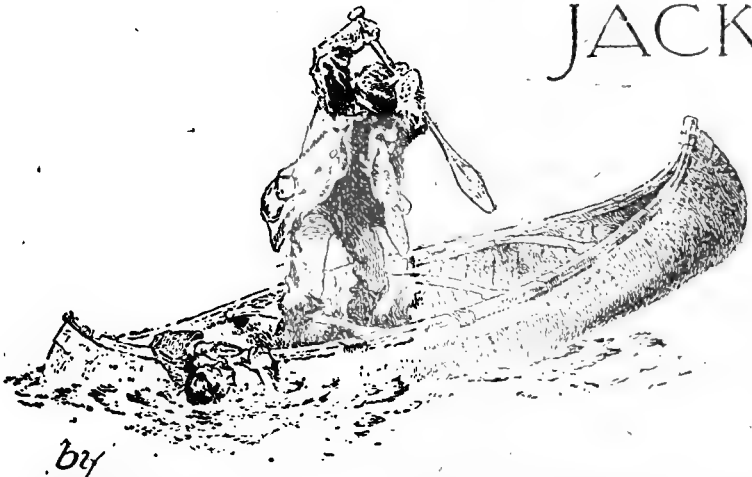
Whereupon the English left the Audencia, making courteous farewells to the governor, and swaggering from the door. Fray Raymundo said a prayer of thanksgiving that no man had been hurt on either side, and blessed the happy chance that rid the shores of the English, and especially El Andreque.

Which ends his testimony, except for the remark that when the *Santa Maria* was returned to port with the other ships, when the English ship sailed the next morning, she floated strangely high in the water. Officials of his Excellency who boarded her found, pinned to the mast in the hold a receipt for two hundred and fifty thousand pounds in silver, paid by his Majesty, King Philip II. of Spain, to Elizabeth, Queen of England.



Digitized by Google

TWILIGHT JACK



by Kathrene and Robert Pinkerton

Authors of "The Iron Factor," "The Northwoman," etc.

IT WAS early in the morning when Ed Sinnard arrived, his face white, his eyes wide and staring, his clothing brush-torn, wet and muddy.

Twilight Jack, Horace Milner, "the man from the States who's been boarding with Jack," and Dave Hogan, Abiwin's sole merchant, were in the store, but Sinnard seemed to see only Hogan.

"Give us a drink, quick, Dave, if you've got any on the place," he demanded. "And set me out something to eat, too. It's an hour before the hotel will open."

Dave Hogan had never been known to show excitement, curiosity, surprise or interest. He reached for a bottle behind the sugar bag with one hand, grasped a fistful of crackers with the other and set them on the counter. As quietly and as quickly he opened a can of beans and a can of meat.

Sinnard grasped the bottle and drank as only woodsmen and Indians can drink, with swallow after swallow, as if it were water.

"Dave," he said as he set it down at last, "mind that crazy fellow who was in here last Winter telling you he was a murderer?"

Dave nodded and looked out of the window reflectively.

"Kind of reddish brown hair and hadn't shaved for a month," he began to recite. "Came in here one night just before closing time. You was here, Ed. Called me to the back end and asked if I was the boss. When I told him yes he said, 'I'm a murderer. I've killed a man.' I said, 'So? Where was this?' He says, 'In a cabin on Hunting Shack River.' 'How come that?' I asked him. He says, 'I never meant to. Honest, mister, I didn't but—' and he starts to shake all over and covered up his face with his hands. I thought he was going to cry. Then I turns to you, Ed, and asks if there is a cabin on Hunting Shack. I didn't think there was, and you says there isn't. I hadn't ever heard of any one up there.

"I thought he was loose somewhere from the looks of him, and after a while when he makes a nuisance of himself I throws him out. He must have took the passenger that night. I never saw him again. Probably some fellow living alone so long he went crazy and thought he did kill some one. A man's got no business living by himself in the bush."

"Well, he did kill a man, like he said," declared Sinnard excitedly. "There is a cabin on Hunting Shack River, a new one built last Fall, and it's there now, and there's a dead man in it. And Len Shaw's dead, too, and I nearly drowned with him, and you'd

Digitized by Google

better telegraph to the provincial police, Dave."

"Len Shaw dead," repeated Hogan, displaying his one emotion, sympathy. "How come that?"

"Len and I found this shack and the dead man in it. He had been dead quite a while. We started to town quick, thinking to tell the police. On Long Lake two days ago the waves turned that cranky canoe of Len's over. You know Len couldn't swim, and there was a big sea running. You remember how it blew two days ago. I held on to the canoe but I never saw Len again. He went down right between the two portages. about the middle. I let go the canoe, thinking I might find him, but I didn't, and I swum to shore and have been ever since getting here through the bush."

"That's good traveling," commented Twilight Jack. "Two days ago you went over, eh? That would be Monday."

"Yes, Monday," answered Sinnard. "You know how the sea runs in those narrow places on Long Lake. And that canoe of Len's wasn't fit for a creek."

"That's the day we were hung up on the big lake coming down," said Twilight to Milner. "There was a good sea running."

"Here, Jack," said Hogan, as he handed the trapper a sheet of paper on which he had been writing. "Take this to the station and tell Benny to hurry it up. They can send a man on tonight's train if they get it in time."

Milner followed Twilight out of the store and up to the station. Neither spoke until they had turned back, the message delivered to the operator.

"It's lucky for that man that Hogan didn't believe his story," Milner finally commented. "He must have had lots of time to get away."

"If he didn't tell everybody else about it, too," replied the trapper. "Must have made him sort of crazy, from what Dave says. And it's too bad about Len Shaw. He was a fine lad, Len. Guess you didn't know him."

"No, I never saw him. Who is the man who was killed?"

"Never heard of a cabin on Hunting Shack. Some trapper just moved in last Fall, maybe. Want to go up there?"

"To the place where he was murdered?"

"Yes, I'd like to look around. We'll talk with Sinnard again and start up. Maybe it's some one I know."

They returned to the store, but Sinnard had gone to the hotel. They followed to find he had taken a room and had gone to sleep without even removing his shoes.

THERE was nothing left for Twilight but to go back to Hogan for a second recital of the visit of the man who had claimed to be a murderer. But this yielded nothing of value. The storekeeper had given all the details the first time. He had not believed the man, had considered him insane and had grown tired of the fellow's repeated and frenzied assertions that he had never meant to kill.

"He was crazy, whether he did it or not," concluded the storekeeper. "He probably went crazy thinking about it and made himself believe he never intended to do it. Maybe he didn't. Funny things happen in the bush."

For an hour Twilight Jack sat on the counter studying the toes of his shoepacks as they swung into and out of view.

There was nothing striking about Twilight except, possibly, his close adherence to the characteristics of a type fast vanishing. He was a woodsman, thoroughly, exclusively, truly. His shoepacks were well oiled, snugly laced, and just an even two inches of gray sock showed above the tops. His wool trousers were rolled up neatly and his shirt of red and black checks was buttoned to the throat.

His face, pleasant, brown, clean shaven, was that of a man who has made himself a master in his own world, but whose mastery has not brought conceit or arrogance. His face and the gray eyes with the sun wrinkles about them invited only friendship and confidence. Yes, and confidences. There is something gentle about a woodsman of the old school, something soft and kindly that seems to have been made even softer and more kindly by the hard things which enter so largely into his life.

Twilight's attention was turned from his toes only after the operator had run over to the store with a telegram and Dave Hogan had read it.

"You're getting a reputation, Jack," said the storekeeper. "The police remembered how you caught that fellow who was poisoning the Government's dogs. They wired that they would send a man tonight but that I was to get you right away. They want you to look this thing over."

Digitized by Google

"I was going up that way anyhow," answered the trapper quietly. "See here, Dave," and he led Hogan to the back of the store, where he whispered to him a moment.

The storekeeper listened closely and returned to his counter, while Twilight, with a nod to Milner, went out and down to the lake.

"You won't mind going up to the Hunting Shack, will you?" asked Twilight as they shoved out from shore.

"Not at all," answered Milner as he swung his paddle from the bow. "Do you think they'll catch the man?"

"I don't know. That's for the police. Maybe he told other people, too, and they know where he is. And maybe he got it all off his chest to Dave that night and is keeping still. Dave will give the police a good description of him."

"Why don't you wait for the police, Jack?"

"Remember that wind that held us up on our way to town Monday?" was the irrelevant answer.

"Yes."

"We were on the east shore of the big lake, and it blew straight out of the west, and blew hard. Now Long Lake runs north and south. It's about six miles long and never more than half a mile wide. Where you cross it coming from Hunting Shack River it ain't more than a quarter of a mile. A wind can't kick up much of a sea in a quarter of a mile, though that same place is mighty nasty if the wind is north or south or quartering and gets a sweep the length of the lake."

"I don't quite understand."

"Neither do I, but I'm going to. Len Shaw, if he couldn't swim, was a mighty good canoeman, and so is Ed Sinnard. I don't think they'd go over even with the wind the length of the lake, and I know they couldn't with it blowing across. That's why I wanted to get started early before they come out to drag for Len's body."

"You don't mean that Len didn't drown?" demanded Milner.

"Oh, he drowned all right. But I'm curious to learn why he drowned."

It was late in the afternoon before they reached Long Lake. And it was almost dark when, after much searching along the shores, they picked up the paddles and found the canoe. Carefully Twilight went over every inch of these, giving them a minute examination which seemed even to the watching Milner a little unnecessary. At last in the darkness they paddled back to the portage to make camp for the night.

"It ain't very deep and it ain't very wide, and they ought to find Len easy here," said the trapper after supper as he looked at the black shore across the narrow lake.

"You don't think Sinnard killed this man and then drowned Shaw to cover his tracks, do you?" asked Milner.

"No, that would be easy seen if the man had been dead a long while. But I would like to know how they come to go over with the wind in the west. Lots of funny things happen in the bush, but there's always a reason why if you look for it."

The long paddle the next morning was made with almost no comment from either man. Silence was Twilight's habit when he was traveling, the natural, quiet, watchful progress of the man who knows and understands and loves the wilderness. Milner had not objected to this trait since he had come to live with the trapper the previous Fall. He, too, was a quiet man, although his silence was that of retrospection rather than observation. With a story of a nervous breakdown readily understood after one glance at his face, he had come to Twilight Jack with a plea to be taken in for the Winter, or until his health had been regained.

It was the man himself rather than the generous offer of payment that had decided the trapper, and the two, despite their silences, had developed a mutual regard and understanding. Twilight really dreaded the time when his friend must leave, as he was beginning to speak of doing.

On Hunting Shack River they proceeded slowly and at noon came to the cabin of which Sinnard had told. Twilight immediately turned the canoe to the opposite shore and made camp.

"Let's go over and see what there is," he suggested after they had washed the lunch dishes.

Silently they paddled across the stream and stepped out. Milner accompanied Twilight almost to the door and then suddenly turned back.

"I don't care for that sort of thing, Jack," he explained. "I'll wait outside."

He took a seat on a stump near the river and looked out over the stream. For an hour he did not move, and for an hour Twilight did not come out of the cabin.

Digitized by Google

It was a low, one-roomed affair, evidently built only the Fall before. From the brush lying where the trees had been felled Milner guessed they had been cut late in September. The ax marks on the stumps were ragged. The trees had been "beavered" down. The cabin itself was roughly, unskilfully made. Everything about it proclaimed the work of a woods novice.

When Twilight finally came out he walked around the building, examining packing cases, tin cans and other refuse. He moved slowly about the clearing, looked into a side window through which a bullet evidently had passed.

Then he left the open and was gone for a long time in the brush behind the cabin. When Milner had almost concluded to look for him he reappeared and went to the canoe. In this he paddled up-stream a hundred yards, drifting back with the current, sometimes standing, sometimes kneeling, but always looking intently at the cabin.

He landed again and walked up the shore to a large windfall which he examined very carefully. This done he returned to Milner.

"Let's go across and cook supper," he suggested. "The policeman ought to be along about six o'clock, if he got to Abiwin last night. We might have a meal ready for him."

AS THE tea water came to a boil a canoe turned a bend up-stream and a few minutes later drew up at the bank before the camp.

"Hello, Twilight," called the man in the bow. "Got your man yet?"

There was something in his manner as well as in his words that indicated his amusement. But the trapper ignored both.

"I expected you folks," he answered, "and got supper ready. Come up and set in."

Twilight introduced the bowman to Milner as Wallace Lochrie of the provincial police. The stern paddler was a canoeman from Abiwin.

"Got your man yet, Jack?" repeated Lochrie when the pipes were lighted.

"There 's some things I'd like to show you this evening," replied the trapper.

Lochrie stretched out flat on his back, his attitude as indifferent as his words when he said:

"All I'm after is the body. We'll have to take that out and try to identify it. As for the man who did it, we needn't worry. We've got him, and a confession, too."

"Got him!" exclaimed Milner. "You mean——"

"They've got that crazy fellow who told Dave Hogan he was the murderer," interrupted Twilight quietly. "They caught him and he told the whole thing, how he was coming down the river on the ice and saw a moose and started shooting at it and the moose never dropped and when his gun was empty he went up and saw it was only a stump that looked like a moose's head, it being nearly dark."

"Where did you get that?" demanded Lochrie as he sat up with a jerk and stared at Twilight.

"And after he saw what he was shooting at," continued the trapper calmly, "he looked on the other side of the stump and there right in line was a cabin. He went over and there was a hole through the window and he opened the door and saw a dead man inside and thought he had shot him when he was shooting at that stump, and he got scared and ran away and it got on his mind so he told Dave Hogan when he got to Abiwin and when Dave wouldn't believe him he went somewhere else, and you fellows heard about it and got him."

"Who told you all this?" insisted Lochrie. "He confessed only yesterday in Port Arthur, after you had left Abiwin."

"Nobody had to tell me that," answered Twilight, "nor that he didn't kill this man any more than a rabbit."

"Didn't kill him!" exclaimed Lochrie. "He says he did!"

"He might say it, and he might believe it, but he didn't kill him. The man was dead when he got there. Had been dead for a long time. Probably if he hadn't been so scared he would have noticed that there wasn't any fresh sign about the place. I can see how a man would lose his head that way."

"Well, that's exactly the story he told," said Lochrie, "and here you know all about it. Come on over and show me."

"But who did kill the man?" demanded Milner, who had been listening closely.

No one answered as all four went down to the canoes, nor as they paddled across the river to the cabin. In silence, too, they walked to the door, which Twilight pushed open. Immediately Milner turned away, and the canoeman from Abiwin followed.

Digitized by Google

"That's too much for me," said the latter. "How we ever going to get that across all those portages?"

But Lochrie followed Twilight inside and stood beside him as he looked around the small room.

"You see," began Twilight, "he was shot right where he is now, sitting in that chair. He was shot three times through the body. Two of them got the heart, I guess. One bullet went through the back of the chair and is on the floor. I picked it up but put it right back where it was.

"The bullet that came through the window hit that log there and it's just showing through on the outside. You can dig it out and see it's a soft-nosed rifle bullet. That one on the floor behind the chair is a lead bullet out of a big revolver. That ought to clear the lad who thinks he did it."

"It does," admitted Lochrie, "but, of course, any one could have seen that, Twilight. The point is, who did kill him, and who is this fellow."

"Them's two questions I don't think you or anybody else will ever answer," was the reply. "There isn't a thing in this place to give any idea who this man is, and, of course, after all this time there isn't a chance of getting anything on the man who killed him. There's this much that's easy to see: This man came in from the outside and built this shack without any help. It shows he never handled an ax much, and the cuttings show he came just about the time the leaves turned in September.

"I live less than fifteen miles from here, and one trap line comes within five miles, but I never knew he was here and never heard of him. When that fellow told Dave Hogan he'd killed a man here, Dave wouldn't believe it because he never heard of any one on Hunting Shack River, and nobody else ever did."

"We'll get track of him somehow. He had to leave some town and bring quite an outfit and a lot of grub."

"Maybe you can," admitted Twilight, "but the chances are that a man who wanted to hide this bad didn't get careless when he started for here."

"Seems like he was keeping out of the way of some one or some thing and thought the woods a good place to hide in," said Lochrie as he looked around the room. "Maybe he was wanted in the States."

"Maybe," agreed Twilight.

"There's nothing here, no clue of any kind?" asked Lochrie. "Have you looked everything over?"

"There isn't a piece of writing or a letter or anything of the sort in the place," answered the trapper. "I went over it close. There's this, though," and he indicated a rubber band on the floor with his foot, "and this," and he pointed toward a baking powder can in a corner.

Lochrie bent forward to pick them up, but Twilight held him back.

"Wait a minute," he advised gently. "I haven't touched either one, and I want you to look close before you do."

The policeman went down on his hands and knees and examined the band and the can. At last he picked up the can, into which he had been trying to look with his face close to the floor. He peered inside, shook something out into his hand, looked at it closely and then returned it.

"You've got eyes, Jack," he said at last. "I see why you left word with Hogan to hold Sinnard. How much do you think there was?"

"I couldn't even guess," replied the trapper, "but it must have been a big roll of money to fit so tight in the can it cut off the corner of a bill slipping it in."

"And there's no dust on the band or the can, like there is on everything else," mused Lochrie. "But I've got to give you the credit for seeing it."

"It wasn't eyes at all. I was just looking for the reason for a queer happening."

Lochrie turned and examined the body, seeming to see it for the first time.

"Fine job we've got, getting that out," he commented at last. "Dig out those bullets, Jack, while I get the lad to help me with the coroner business. I brought a lot of oilcloth and we'll sew him up in it. Pick up anything else you need to show what we've found."

THE next morning the two canoes started early up the Hunting Shack River but it was late in the afternoon before they finally portaged into Long Lake and paddled across to the group collected on the other side. The portages had been hard and the burden not an easy thing to handle, and there had been little conversation.

Silence greeted them, too, when they reached the east shore of Long Lake. The

Digitized by Google

half-dozen men from Abiwin who stood there drew to one side and the newcomers saw a body lying on the ground behind them.

"Just found him," Hogan finally volunteered. "Right in the middle in about twenty feet of water. We haven't looked for his canoe yet."

Twilight Jack stepped out and bent over Len Shaw's body. He looked at the face for a moment and then lifted first one hand and then the other.

"Who's watching Sinnard?" he asked as he turned to Lochrie.

"My partner stayed in town to do that."

"Then we might as well camp here and go on tomorrow," said the trapper. "It would be bad work on those portages in the dark with the two of them."

The next afternoon the crowd gathered in Hogan's store. Sinnard, refreshed by a long sleep and several good meals, was sitting on the counter when Twilight and Lochrie came in from the hotel.

"Hello, Ed," said the trapper as he stopped before the other. "I've got a yarn to tell you and I want you to set me right if I make any mistakes as I go along."

Sinnard looked at him closely and then answered easily—

"Go ahead, Twilight."

"You and Len Shaw was going down Hunting Shack River when you saw this cabin and you remembered what the man told Dave last Winter."

Sinnard smiled and nodded.

"You two stopped and found a dead man in the cabin. You looked around a bit, but all you found was a baking powder can. You emptied that out and found a big roll of money in it. You and Len thought you ought to take it along, as some one else not quite as honest might come along and find the same thing.

"So you started to town to notify the police. Crossing Long Lake an idea you'd been working on got too much for you and you tipped the canoe over and then crawled back into it. Len grabbed the gunwale and you hit his hands with the paddle, two or three licks it was. He had to let go, and he couldn't swim, so he drowned, and you got to shore and came to town. You could have brought the canoe, but that wouldn't look well, so you set it adrift half full of water and walked in through the bush."

The man on the counter continued to swing his feet, but unconsciously. His face showed that he had lost the power to think. Then suddenly he burst forth:

"You're a liar, Twilight! It's all a lie!"

"I found your canoe and your paddles, Ed," continued Twilight evenly. "One paddle blade had a couple of nicks in the edge of it, and the gunwale of the canoe, on the right side near the middle, had a couple."

"That doesn't prove anything!" shouted Sinnard.

"No, but two of Len Shaw's fingers on his right hand are broken and the flesh is bruised. You ought to be hung, Ed, turning against a man like Len."

"It's a lie!" shouted Sinnard wildly. "It's a lie! I never tipped over the canoe. There was a big sea on."

"Not on Long Lake with a west wind blowing, Ed," answered Twilight. "How much money did it have to be to make you put poor Len out of the way like that?"

"I don't know anything about any money. You've lost your head over this detective business, Twilight. A man ain't safe with you around any more."

The store door opened and the policeman who had remained in Abiwin entered.

"Did you find it?" asked Twilight Jack.

The man nodded and held out a big roll of bills, soggy and matted together.

"I went down the shore like you told me and found where he had been walking to town along the beach," he reported. "One place he went up into the brush and I looked around and found this wrapped up in birch bark in a hollow log. I didn't try to count it. It's too wet."

"The foot marks in the sand will fit this fellow, won't they?" asked Lochrie.

"I'll find out," answered his partner, and he began in a very businesslike way to remove Sinnard's shoes, despite that man's protests. When he had gone Twilight turned to Sinnard.

"Better fess up, Ed," he advised gently. "It will save him that long walk down the lake and back."

THE next morning, three days later than they had intended to start, Twilight Jack and Milner began their journey back to the trapper's cabin. Len Shaw had been buried, Sinnard, his confessed slayer, had been taken away by the policemen, and the body of the un-

Digitized by Google

known victim of the Hunting Shack River tragedy had been shipped to Port Arthur with the vague idea that it might be identified.

Twilight and Milner paddled silently for a long time, as was their custom. At last the trapper, from his place in the stern, asked suddenly—

"What if they had taken that poor devil at his word and convicted him of that murder?"

Milner whirled on the thwart and looked at his friend. The trapper's eyes held his steadily, and back of the kindliness and understanding in them lurked a question, a question that was unmistakable. Milner stared back, panic-stricken. Gradually he gained control of himself, and when he answered he said quietly—

"I would have told the truth."

"I know you would, lad," said Twilight gently. "I know you, and I know now why you've been hanging around until this thing was found out. Will they ever find out who that fellow on Hunting Shack was?"

"I don't think there's a chance."

Twilight continued to paddle, Milner to look at him. Finally the man in the bow began to speak in a low, tense tone which displayed the emotion vibrating beneath the pressure:

"He didn't deserve to live. He should have been killed long ago. I wish I had when I first knew him. You would have known the kind he was, Jack, the first time you saw him. He—he——"

"Never mind, lad," interrupted Twilight. "I've lived with you long enough to know you, and I'm not asking any questions. I'm only glad I don't know any more than I do."

"But how did you know it?"

"First I knew the man who killed him didn't do it for his money, because I saw Sinnard got that. Then I saw he was shot with a .45 revolver, and last Winter I saw the muzzle of one sticking out of your blankets, the first I ever saw in this country.

"When, of course, you used to make trips by yourself in the Winter, being gone several days and telling me you liked being alone and camping out in Winter. The last one was when I told you that a big snow-storm was coming, but you went any way. That was about the middle of February. That man told Hogan his story the first of March."

"But that's only guessing, Twilight."

"I'm glad it is only guessing. If I'd had any more evidence I don't know what I'd have done. I like you, and the Government had asked me to help. I don't know what I would have done. Now I can keep my conscience pretty clear, for we couldn't have proved anything on you and only made it nasty all around."

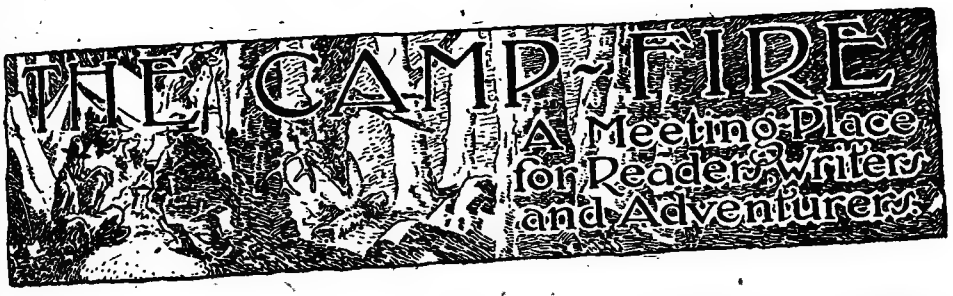
For the first time Twilight stopped paddling. He picked up the cup that always hung from the thwart ahead of him and took a drink of lake water.

"Besides," he faltered, "I know you, lad, and I know prison wouldn't be any worse than the nights you'll wake up and see him sitting there in that chair in the cabin on Hunting Shack. The law can't add anything to some men's punishment."

He began to paddle again, and at last Milner, too, took up his blade and returned to this work.

After a moment Twilight, without missing a stroke, pulled a long, thin strip of cloth from his shirt pocket and dropped it overboard. He had found it hanging in the brush back of the cabin on Hunting Shack, about knee high for a man on snow-shoes. As it floated away Twilight caught a glimpse of the woven name of the American maker. Since the big snow-storm in February Milner had been wearing a buckskin thong to hold up one sock.

Digitized by Google



A BIRD'S-EYE view of a busy life, this comrade being now a planter in Guatemala:

I have grown bananas in the tropics, and coffee, sugar-cane, coconuts, cacao (chocolate), etc., etc. Served a three-year enlistment in the regulars during the Spanish-American War and the Philippine Insurrection. I was in the Civil Service Bureau of the P. I., and later in Bilibid Prison, but drawing a salary, not as prisoner. I was an Internal Revenue officer for the Insular Government, and a cartoonist for the Manila papers. I served as interpreter in some very interesting trials (for I speak five dialects of Malay). I served as embalmer on American transports and planted rubber in the Malay Peninsula, about Kaula Lampuur. I also did brokerage business in Singapore, and on the China coast. I later changed some of the tea plantations of Ceylon into rubber plantations. I was later an undertaker in Egypt.

I HAVE loafed a bit in Europe, especially in Spain. I know the United States fairly well, and I have worked in smelters in Peru. I have shipped as A. B. on sailing and steam vessels, and have punched a typewriter in Colonel Goethals' office in Culebra, Panama. I have lived in every country in Central America, and I helped build the Madeira-Mamoré Railway along the border of Brazil and Bolivia. I have cut rubber for a living in the hinterland in the Matto Grosso in Brazil, and have had the Asiatic cholera and the beriberi, but so far have escaped the yellow fever. We have it here now in this town. I have also been a candy-maker, and got by as a drug-clerk. Naturally I have done some jobs as a surgeon. I was in Mexico until after the taking of Vera Cruz by the Americans.—Identification Card No. 1361.

WITH his first story in this issue, Harold A. Lamb follows our Camp-Fire custom and gives an account of himself:

YOUR Camp-Fire club enlisted my sympathy before *Adventure* became a market for my stories. Very much would I like to make my bow in the pages of your magazine with a full-fledged autobiography; when my memory turns backward along the corridors of time, I realize the fact that I am only two years old, being for that space of time out of the national institution of learning, the college. And as for an outstanding feature during the two years, there is only the brief incident of a bacon-hunting porcupine who scratched my back as payment for his supper, through the tent wall one night.

OTHERWISE, I am what you might call a child of tradition. I was told at an early age that one of my grandfathers had been a poet laureate of the Washington Irving literary circle, two generations ago, while other ancestors had been naval men. In an effort to do justice to the two branches of my ancestral tree I made the decision at the age of six to write naval stories, my decision being based upon the excitement attending the Spanish-American war. This determination was strengthened when I discovered, after preparing for such an event, that I could not pass the eyesight test at Annapolis.

One of my great-uncles started the steam navy of the United States on its way at a time when, curious as it now seems, the merits of fast sailing frigates ruled favorite over the steam-driven type in the Administration and Congress. At that time it was popularly supposed that the weight of a ship's engines would make the vessel unsailable. A group of test steamers were built by the Navy Department, one of them, the *Wampanoag*, being capable of a speed of over 22 knots—remarkable for those days. Unfortunately the *Wampanoag* was laid up by a journal that overheated, and the opponents of the steam navy pointed triumphantly to "the steamer that wouldn't go."

It was imperative that the vessel be sent on its trial trip. My great-uncle suggested, in his capacity of chief engineer of the navy, that the journal might be cooled by placing it in a barrel of olive oil during the trip. The experiment was tried and the test proved the great speed of the *Wampanoag*.

AND a few words about his story in this issue:

SO RICH in material are the logs of men on Drake's ship, and the reports of the Spanish officials who tried to take him prisoner on the coast of the South Sea, that it is possible to carry them out only a little further to form a story. In "His Excellency" the only extensions of fact are to bring Drake and the Governor face to face, and to have the *Santa Maria*—Well, I would rather have you read the story first.

The point is that the context, the attitude of Drake toward the mutineers, his remark about his sword and coat of arms, the speech to the Governor about Adam's will, etc., actually took place. The setting—ship, men, Spaniards and Peruvians—is actual.

Digitized by Google

TALKING of sheer nerve, it is hard to beat Francis Drake, the man who set out for Magellan Strait, which was, in those days of pigmy ships and crude navigation, a fifty-fifty proposition between passage to the South Sea and to Davy Jones's locker.

Once safely through the strait, Drake was confronted with the Spanish coast, men, guns and ships enough to sink his little ship a thousand times. But he got away with it. And with a few million dollars worth of silver. Not that Drake was essentially a pirate. He embarked with the simple idea of getting money from the Spaniards for the poverty-stricken treasury of Queen Elizabeth. And his venture paid enormous dividends to Her Majesty.

The great treasure ship that Drake captured contained, in his own words, "great riches, as jewels and precious stones, thirteen chests full of royals of plate, four-score pound weight of gold, and five and twenty tunne of silver."

Somehow, the Corsair, as the Spaniards dubbed him, always got away when they were all set to catch him. Witness the narrative of Pedro Sarmiento, Spanish mariner, as to the exploit at El Callao de Lima.

"The royal officers and the chief governor mustered the people, so as to repel the Corsairs, and sent despatches to His Excellency, who armed himself with great haste and ordered his gentlemen and retainers to do the same. The bells were rung to give the alarm and criers were sent from door to door to warn the inhabitants to come to the public square, where His Excellency took his stand and sent men to guard the King's money . . . but the English were already far out to sea, taking with them the ship."—HAROLD A. LAMB.

THERE'S one thing I wish you'd do to make our work easier here in the office. The editorial department has nothing to do with subscriptions, renewals, getting back copies, etc. (except as stated in our monthly "Back Issues of Adventure"). All these are matters for the Circulation Department, not the Editorial. So when you write about any of them, won't you address your letter not to *Adventure* or to me but to The Ridgway Company? If there's something else to write me about, please enclose the circulation matter on a separate sheet with your name and address given on it.

IN THE June issue of last year, which appeared May 3, 1916, in an article entitled "You and Your Country," I gave my platform for national Defense, the things I believed were needed by this country for her safety. At the end of it I felt it was necessary to defend myself from the charge of being an extremist. We were not at war; for nearly two years we had successfully kept out of the struggle in Europe; we were three thousand miles away from it and most of the country felt so safe that it considered those of us who preached Preparedness mere fanatics, dangerous militarists, unsound extremists and alarmists.

But if those of you who still have that issue of *Adventure* will turn back to it you will find that this "extremist" platform *has been adopted.* Of the nine main planks all but one, the formation of a supreme War Council, is, at this writing early in July, being put into operation by the Government. Of the seven minor planks all are now favorably looked upon at Washington and most are already being carried out.

I CALL your attention to this vindication of my program, to this proof that I saw things clear-sightedly and soundly and that, a year and a half ago, I was advocating things which the Government has since found it necessary to adopt. I call your attention, too, to the fact that in the November issue, out October 3, 1914, I first advocated forming the American Legion (which means that, as we make up the magazine several months ahead, I saw the need of it in June or July, before even the European war broke out on August 1, 1914), and that from that time to this I have been steadily arguing for the Preparedness we have now been forced to adopt. I do not emphasize these things through any petty desire to say "I told you so" or through any vanity about myself as a prophet; there were many others who saw equally clearly, though unfortunately for the country they were a small minority. But I am still working for more effective Preparedness. I can accomplish most for it by working through this magazine, and I do not mean to have this work made futile by the idea that I am only a fanatic or an alarmist. I submit over three years of facts to prove that I am not.

BEFORE I say what I want to say, let me make my position very clear. The Administration has made bad mistakes, is doing so now and will continue to do so. We, the people, must pay for these mistakes with our money and with our blood, with aching hearts and hopes deferred. The war will cost us dear enough in these things, but for the mistakes of the Administration we will pay an extra measure. And yet I am loyal to that Administration and will support it right or wrong, wise or foolish. What it tells me to do I will try to do, even if it seems to me a blundering, unjust

Digitized by Google

thing. I will not add to that unjust blunder the unjust blunder of my own disloyalty. The Administration is now our Government, our country; *we* chose it, elected it, are responsible for its being our Government. Only a fool or a traitor will fail to support it.

But, while we must be loyal even to its mistakes, it is not only our right but our duty to devote every effort to induce the Administration to rectify its past mistakes—so far as they can be rectified. It is still more our duty to prevent it, if we can, from making fresh mistakes.

THE Administration failed to prepare the country against the war that is now upon us. Three years were allowed to slip by, wasted. Then, its theories and indecisions confronted by the relentless fact of war, we found ourselves naked and empty-handed, unable to take up the task that had become our unavoidable duty.

President Wilson was re-elected largely by means of the slogan "He kept us out of war." President Wilson did *not* keep us out of war. He *got us into it.* And, having got us there, he's going to keep us there far longer than we would have been if he had seen to it that we were prepared and ready for it. Germany not only openly sneers at our military ineffectiveness but actually bases her diplomatic and military campaigns on the already long delay and the evidence of a much longer delay to come before we can make ourselves really felt on the battle-front. Germany has proved she is no fool. If, instead of three years of "watchful waiting" that watched to no purpose and did not prepare against what it was waiting for, the Administration had clung to its neutrality but had used those precious years to build up the same big fighting-machine it is now desperately and awkwardly trying to build in months instead of years, we should now probably be at peace instead of at war. Do you think that Germany, now openly counting on winning the war before we can get our big machine made, would have been fool enough to launch that machine against herself if *it* had been watchfully waiting?

And if that machine of ours had been ready and if Germany *had* launched it against herself it would have meant her quick defeat and would have eliminated the months of slaughter that are now intervening while we belatedly work at getting our machine ready. Our real opportunity to make peace came and found us unprepared, helpless, futile, unable to seize the chance destiny had placed in our hands. These present months of prolonged slaughter, which could have been avoided by our Preparedness, are the bloody price we and the world at large must pay for the Administration's mistake.

And here is the point. All that now is past and can not be remedied. It would be only unhelpful whining even to mention it *if the Administration were thoroughly profiting by its mistakes.* But it is not. It is making exactly the same kind of mistakes over again. Therefore it is both duty and common sense to protest and to go on protesting.

I SAID the Government had finally adopted all but one of the nine planks urged in this magazine over a year ago. It has, but only in stop-gap fashion. It is preparing against only the present emergency and is planning, after that emergency is past, to drop right back into our old lack of Preparedness. Having refused to believe that the present war would happen to us and having therefore been caught almost totally unprepared, the Administration now calmly refuses to believe that there can be a next emergency and is therefore building up only a temporary fighting-machine, leaving us to fall helplessly into a second trap if it is sprung upon us.

It *is* building up our Navy, rather reluctantly, and that will be a permanent measure—until the immediate need is past and the Administration and its following in Congress begin again the old policy of keeping the Navy from twenty-five to fifty per cent. less efficient than it should be.

It *is* protecting the Panama Canal and I grant that a permanent measure—until the Administration forces allow the defenses to become obsolete or valueless through a resumption of their former policy of keeping short in ammunition and personnel.

It *is* increasing our coast-defense and railway consolidation—subject to the same reservations pertaining to the Canal.

It *is* at least planning the strongest air-fleet in the world. But the Administration's stubborn refusal to create a separate and permanent Department of Aeronautics augurs ill for the permanent efficiency of this vital branch of our defenses.

Digitized by Google

It *is*—at last— getting up-to-date arms and ammunition as fast as it can on short notice, but how slight and halting the plans for permanent future provision in this respect! And how terribly long it is taking to meet even the present emergency!

It *is* organizing a sort of Industrial Reserve of the men having industrial training needed by modern warfare. But it is doing it through an "advisory" and semi-unofficial board that has not been given sufficient power and is falling so short of the need that individual States like New York and Connecticut are separately doing what the Federal Government ought to do.

It *is* organizing the industries themselves —by the same methods used in organizing the workers.

BUT the point on which the Administration's stop-gap and unpermanent policy is most dangerous is the question of universal compulsory military training. It has now tried out its pet hobby of volunteer enlistment and found it utterly inadequate. Bryan's dream-army of a million men rising up between sunrise and sunset is now written down as one of the most childish and ignorant predictions in the world's history. The Administration asked for a total of about 1,400,000 men. There were already about 350,000 in our Army, Navy, Marine Corps and Militia. At this writing, three months after war was declared, the Administration has been able to add, by the volunteer system on which it has so stubbornly insisted, only 350,000 more. Cold facts have now compelled it to admit the ridiculous inefficiency of its hobby. Indeed, almost at the start it showed its own lack of faith in the system upon which it had left our national safety dependent and took steps toward the draft.

Of the 700,000 the volunteer system failed to get, 500,000 must be got by draft. The other 200,000 also will have to be got almost entirely by another draft, for now the volunteers, even after a special appeal by the President, are coming in at the rate of only about 450 a day. Our population is over 100,000,000. Yet when the actual test came the volunteer system was able to get only 350,000 of the 1,050,000 additional soldiers needed and called for—only one man secured out of every three needed.

And of the 1,200,000 men, both volunteers and draft, already secured, 7 out of every 11 were *untrained* when secured. The training of the 500,000 drafts can not even *begin* until *half a year after the declaration of war*. By the rosiest estimates it will take three or four months more to train them, more likely six months—a whole year after the declaration of war. And the Administration was not able to equip the one-third it did raise. A splendid showing—of our inefficiency and unpreparedness!

AND yet, in the face of this overwhelming demolition of its pet system of volunteers and Militia, the Administration refuses to adopt permanently the only substitute actual experience has proved possible—*permanent* universal compulsory military training. The draft is only a temporary measure. After this war the country will revert again to the broken reeds of a tiny Army, volunteers, and half-Federalized and half-baked State Militia. The Administration still clings to its old policy of doing nothing until absolutely forced to do it and keeping it up only so long as absolutely compelled.

It must not be. Who knows, who dares predict, what crisis will come to us out of the world-wide chaos that will follow the present world-war? We all *hope* for lasting peace, but what living man can guarantee that we shall get it? And if that crisis does come, are we again to face our fate, helpless, unready, unprepared? If, instead of a crisis three thousand miles away that will wait for us to go over to it, the new crisis is one that *comes to us*, exploding suddenly on our own shores, what then will be our fate?

We *must* have universal compulsory military service. The Administration must be made to give it to us. Only a majority voice of the people can—or has any right to —force it. *Our* duty is to see that that majority is created and that its voice is raised.

THE only one of the nine planks of *Adventure's* platform of a year ago which has not yet been adopted in even stop-gap fashion is the one calling for a centralized War-Board to control all our war activities, and the need for this too has become so bitterly acute that, according to certain reports that come to me, the issue will be forced upon the Administration before the Summer months are past. If it is

Digitized by Google

not forced at that time it must be forced, by us, the people, at the earliest possible moment. The experience of every other country involved in the war has proved that war-control must be centralized in the hands of a very few and that these few must be given absolute control. It is no violation of democracy. It is merely the sane, temporary delegation of the people's power. It is also a plain case of necessity and self-preservation.

BUT I made one mistake in this plank of my platform. It was not extreme enough. The plan I advocated seemed the one there was then most hope of getting put through. But that War-Board was to include three Cabinet officers, four Congressional chairmen, an Army and a Navy representative. That is too large a board for real efficiency.

Also it has in it three too many Cabinet officers and four too many Congressmen. There must be some few Congressmen who have both large ability and absolutely unselfseeking patriotism, but they are scarce, and there are too many of them who have a knowledge of war that can distinguish clearly between a sixteen-inch gun and a pork-barrel but is very little good beyond that.

My personal opinion of the Cabinet is that it is the weakest we have had in generations and that the only member of it big enough to *fill* his position is Franklin K. Lane, Secretary of the Interior. At the bottom of the list I think most Americans will place Daniels and Baker, the two Secretaries who *should* be most capable in the present need.

Make the War Council small. Put on it one Army man, one Navy man, for their technical knowledge of this highly complex modern warfare, and, say, three civilians trained to handle big affairs. Give them full, unhampered direction of our part in the war and give them full *responsibility*. If they make good, all right. If they do not, we shall know *just where to put the blame* and can replace them.

Such a War-Board is the acute need. I pray it may come into being before this reaches you. If it does not, *work for it* by every legitimate means within your power. Our present system spells the same kind of unnecessary disaster that has come to all other nations that have tried it.

IN ACCORDANCE with Camp-Fire custom William Carlton Davis stands up and introduces himself now that he's given us his first story in our magazine. I do not know him personally but I know his brother, "Bob" Davis of the Munsey magazines, and if he's a chip off the same block I'm for him.

PERHAPS I can tell a few stories about the fire some of these evenings. In thirty years of newspaper work I have had some interesting adventures. I have put across some of the biggest newspaper fakes of the game, many of a scientific character, that got by with the big press, and these may entertain you from time to time if the boys would like to hear them. I could make some confessions, I believe.

WHEN I first started "Ten Million Ems" I intended to make it humorous. I was going to have *John Trib* find out for himself that it was all machine-set, and then have him pi the whole office—linotype and everything else. But when I get going on a story I have great difficulty in avoiding pathos. Silly, isn't it? I also laugh at my own humor. Temperamental, maybe.

That brother of mine, "Bob," doesn't appreciate my stuff at all. I hope some day to have him ask me for something. At that Bob is a great boy.

I have two sons who are gradually breaking into the writing game. I wish I had started at their age. By this time I might have my own Ford.

BORN in Nebraska in 1867. Parents, Reverend and Mrs. George R. Davis. Began newspaper work on the Carson City, Nevada, *Appeal*, under my brother, Sam Davis. My great ambition was to be a bigger liar than he. Alongside of me Ananias was a statistician. For several years I was on the Stockton, California, *Mail*, latterly one of its editors, until I was lured away by Phil Francis, who offered me more money. He raised my wages the second week and blew up the third. The past three years I've been doing special newspaper work, corresponding, and, occasionally, taking a try at the magazines.

I have the best wife and boys that ever spurred on a man's ambition.

Best wishes. Regards to all the boys around the fire. I'll try to hustle my share of the wood.—WILL DAVIS.

I HOPE each one of you will read at least once all of "*Adventure's* Free Services to Readers" which now always runs right after "Camp-Fire." It will save trouble and correspondence. Also, new readers will find there some things that may be of use to them.

Letters still come in for the old "Wanted" and "Letter Friends" departments. Both had to be abolished because, after several years of useful service, two or three people abused them and thereby robbed the rest of you of their use.

Digitized by Google

THE writer of the following letter, a New Yorker, asked for one of our free identification-cards for himself and another for his wife. You can see why.

I have been a reader of *Adventure* for several years but never considered an identification-card, but on Friday, my brother-in-law was struck and killed by a motor-cycle. Though the accident occurred directly in front of his home, One Hundred and Fortieth Street and Broadway, he was picked up, died before reaching the hospital, and his body lay unidentified in the morgue for twenty-four hours before we learned of it, when his identity and residence were discovered through the laundry-marks on his linen.

FOLLOWING Camp-Fire custom, with their first story in this number, Pierre de Lanux and Lawton Mackall rise and introduce themselves. I think that, nowadays, most of us will have two welcomes for M. de Lanux—one for himself and one because he is a Frenchman.

WHEN the little children of my country dream about America, they see themselves, clad in colored shirts and shaggy pantaloons, wearing broad felt hats, big Colt at the belt, pipe between the teeth, —seated in a circle around the camp-fire, which lights up their many faces with a flickering red glow.

And now (with the help of a little imagination) here I am realizing the dream of so many youngsters of France, thanks to the happy custom of *Adventure*.

To determine whether I have any right to sit among you, I'll tell you a little of my story. If you find that I am a miserable high-brow, just send me off packing to my library.

FIRST of all, I learned a lot of things at schools in Paris. (I am still hoping that that knowledge may some day prove useful to me.) I have traveled pretty much all over France, from Brittany to Provence; also Germany, Austria-Hungary, and Russia from south to north; and I have spent some time in Italy, England, and Switzerland. All this would hardly pass for adventures.

In 1912, at the time of the first Balkan war, I went, as correspondent for one of the Parisian dailies, to Serbia, Bulgaria and Macedonia. I saw the Serbian armies defeat the Turks at Kumanovo. I came home by way of the Danube, traveling up that river by boat for 450 miles. Being then still quite young, I had a hard time getting a hearing for the information which I brought back with me in the form of articles and the manuscript of a book; but later, when this book finally was published, it was read all over the world. In 1913 I returned to the Balkans for the second war.

THEN, in 1914, came the great European war. On missions for France I visited Italy (before her intervention), Albania, and Montenegro, crossing the Adriatic four times. There I had some real adventures; particularly a certain departure from Venice, one night, to steal into Trieste under the noses of the famous Austrian police, whose kind watchfulness came near costing me the twelve bullets of the firing squad. And there was also the crossing of northern Albania, a country without government, in comparison with which Central America is a paradise of civilized organization. And many other experiences that I recall.

AFTER that, work with the ambulances of the French Red Cross. The taking of the wounded off the trains at the stations; their stories, warm and bleeding like themselves, of their varied experiences. Then the Belgian front, at Nieuport, right close to the North Sea—there where the last trench reaches out on to the beach and where for months our marines fought and died. Then, as head of a section, my crossing to Saloniki, where I conducted an ambulance train destined for the Army of the East, and where I met many people belonging to twenty to twenty-five different nations, all gathered there. Then, a visit to the Somme front during the great Franco-British offensive of the Summer of 1916.

Finally, I am sent to the United States; and the discovery of a dozen of your great cities is, believe, me, an adventure that certainly counts, even after all the others.

And so much for me.

THE story of the diamond is the work of imagination pure and simple. I amused myself with playing between the true and the seeming-true, until I myself got mixed. But if my new friends of the Camp-Fire will have faith in me, I hope some day to bring them bigger game, which will be more worthy of them.—PIERRE DE LANUX.

IF MY friend de Lanux, with such a lot of experiences to his credit, fears that he may be thought a mere highbrow ("*un sale intellectuel*" is the phrase he uses), then surely I must put myself down for not only a miserable highbrow but also a tenderfoot: for, though I have crossed the Atlantic a number of times and knocked about in many parts of Europe and America, though I have risked my life in the Alps and been arrested as a "spy" in Holland, though I have been in a ghastly railroad wreck and likewise a disaster at sea, my wanderings have nearly always been among people that were utterly civilized; and somewhere in the depths of my spare trunk lie interred two university degrees. I was even, for a time, an assistant editor of a very sedate magazine.

THE oddest adventure I ever had was being mistaken for a certain Prince Consort in Europe. It happens that this particular potentate has a round, somewhat florid, and decidedly sodden countenance, which nevertheless (if not *therefore*) rather resembles mine. Our heights and figures, also, are not unlike. Well, one rather dark afternoon I presented myself at the door of his palace seeking a special passport for some war-reporting. I ran the gantlet of various officials and finally got an interview with a general, to whom I meekly explained my request. He heard me politely and then ushered me into an empty room, telling me to wait there while he discussed my case with others in authority.

So I waited there in that spacious, heavy-beamed, richly-carved chamber. There was a long, massive table in the middle, lined with great high-backed chairs, and with an unusually handsome one at the

Digitized by Google

end. The latter looked the most comfortable, so I dropped into it and waited there in the dusk and silence.

SUDDENLY the door opened and in strode an officer in gorgeous uniform. I straightened up with a jump and stared at him, wondering what he would order me to do.

Whereupon he clapped his heels together with a sharp *clack!* saluted punctiliously, and began: "Your Majesty, I have the honor . . ."

I have never been able to decide which was the greater, my consternation, or the fury with which he turned on his heel and slammed the door after him.

MY SHARE in "Imitations" is the lesser one. De Lanux spun the yarn in French; I translated it and altered it. Where his imagination left off playing with it, mine took up the fun. The main credit for the story must certainly go to him.—

LAWTON MACKALL.

A THIRD list of books that will be valuable to any man in or entering the armed service of our country will be found on page 191. Some have information valuable to any civilian.

ARTHUR SULLIVANT HOFFMAN.

ADVENTURE'S FREE SERVICES AND ADDRESSES

These services of *Adventure's* are free to *any one*. They involve much time, work and expense on our part, but we offer them gladly and ask in return only that you *read and observe the simple rules*, thus saving needless delay and trouble for you and us. The whole spirit of this magazine is one of friendliness. No formality between editors and readers. Whenever we *can* help you we're ready and willing to try.

Identification Cards

Free to any reader. Just send us (1) your name and address, (2) name and address of party to be notified, (3) a stamped and self-addressed return envelope.

Each card bears this inscription, each printed in English, French, Spanish, German, Portuguese, Dutch, Italian, Arabic, Chinese, Russian, and Japanese:

"In case of death or serious emergency to bearer, address serial number of this card, care of *Adventure*, New York, stating full particulars, and friends will be notified."

In our office, under each serial number, will be registered the name of bearer and of one friend, with permanent address of each. No name appears on the card. Letters will be forwarded to friend, unopened by us. Names and addresses treated as confidential. We assume no other obligations. Cards not for business identification. Cards furnished free, *provided stamped and addressed envelope accompanies application.* We reserve the right to use our own discretion in all matters pertaining to these cards.

Later we may furnish a metal card or tag. If interested in metal cards, say so on a *post-card—not* in a letter. No obligation entailed. These post-cards, filed, will guide us as to demand and number needed.

A moment's thought will show the value of this system of card-identification for any one, whether in civilization or out of it. Remember to furnish stamped and addressed envelope and to *give in full the names and addresses of self and friend or friends when applying.*

Back Issues of *Adventure*

A free department for the benefit of those readers who wish to buy or sell back copies of this magazine.

Our own supply of old issues is exhausted back of 1916. Readers report that *Adventures* can almost never be found at second-hand book-stalls. Our office files are, of course, complete and we do not buy back copies or act as agents for them.

Will sell: 1911, Dec., 1912, 1913, 1914, 1915, 1916, all complete; 1917 all to present issue. Will not break set. A. W. PERRY, 129 N. Madison St., Rockford, Ill.

Manuscripts

Glad to look at any manuscript. We have no "regular staff" of writers. A welcome for new writers. *It is not necessary to write asking to submit your work.*

When submitting a manuscript, if you write a letter concerning it, enclose it *with* the manuscript; do *not* send it under separate cover. Enclose stamped and addressed envelope for return. All manuscripts should be typewritten double-spaced, with wide margins, not rolled, name and address on first page. We assume no risk for manuscripts or illustrations submitted, but use all due care while they are in our hands. Payment on acceptance.

We want only clean stories. Sex, morbid, "problem," psychological and supernatural stories barred. Use almost no fact-articles. Can not furnish or suggest collaborators. Use fiction of almost any length; under 3000 welcomed.

Missing Friends or Relatives

Our free service department "Lost Trails" in the pages following, though frequently used in cases where detective agencies, newspapers, and all other methods have failed, or for finding people long since dead, has located one out of about every five inquired for. Except in case of relatives, inquiries from one sex to the other are barred.

Expeditions and Employment

While we should like to be of aid in these matters, experience has shown that it is not practicable.

Mail Address and Forwarding Service

This office, assuming no responsibility, will be glad to act as a forwarding address for its readers or to hold mail till called for, provided necessary postage is supplied.

Addresses

Adventurers' Club—No connection with this magazine, but data will be furnished by us. Can join only by attending a meeting of an existing chapter or starting a new chapter as provided in the Club's rules.

Order of the Restless—Organizing to unite for fellowship all who feel the wanderlust. Entirely separate from Adventurers' Club, but, like it, first suggested in this magazine, though having no connection with it aside from our friendly interest. Address WAYNE EBERLY, 731 Guardian Bldg., Cleveland, O., in charge of preliminary organizing.

Camp-Fire—Any one belongs who wishes to.

National School Camp Ass'n—Military and industrial training and camps for boys 12 or over. Address 1 Broadway, New York City.

High-School Volunteers of the U. S.—A similar organization coöperating with the N. S. C. A. (above). Address *Everybody's*, Spring and Macdougal, New York City.

Rifle Clubs—Address Nat. Rifle Ass'n of America, 1108 Woodward Bldg., Washington, D. C.

(*See also under "Standing Information" in "Ask Adventure."*)

General Questions from Readers

In addition to our free service department "Ask Adventure" on the pages following, *Adventure* can sometimes answer other questions within our general field. When it can, it will. Expeditions and employment excepted.

Remember

Magazines are made up ahead of time. An item received today is too late for the current issue; allow for two or three months between sending and publication.

Digitized by Google

Ask Adventure

A Free Question and Answer Service Bureau of Information on Outdoor Life and Activities Everywhere and Upon the Various Commodities Required Therein. Conducted for Adventure Magazine by our Staff of Experts.

QUESTIONS should be sent, not to this office, but direct to the expert in charge of the department in whose field it falls. So that service may be as prompt as possible, he will answer you by mail direct. But he will also send to us a copy of each question and answer, and from these we shall select those of most general interest and publish them each month in this department, thus making it itself an exceedingly valuable and standing source of practical information. Unless otherwise requested, inquirer's name and town are printed with question; street numbers not given.

When you ask for *general* information on a given district or subject the expert will probably give you some valuable general pointers and refer you to books or to local or special sources of information.

Our experts will in all cases answer to the best of their ability, using their own discretion in all matters pertaining to their departments subject only to our general rules for "Ask Adventure," but neither they nor the magazine assumes any responsibility beyond the moral one of trying to do the best that is possible. These experts have been chosen by us not only for their knowledge and experience but for their integrity and reliability. We have emphatically assured each of them that his advice or information is not to be affected in any way by whether a given commodity is or is not advertised in this magazine.

1. **Service free to anybody, but no question answered unless stamped and addressed envelope is enclosed.**
2. **Send each question direct to the expert in charge of the particular department whose field covers it. Do NOT send questions to this magazine.**
3. **No reply will be made to requests for partners, for financial backing, or for chances to join expeditions. "Ask Adventure" covers business and work opportunities, but only if they are outdoor activities, and only in the way of general data and advice. It is in no sense an employment bureau.**
4. **Make your questions definite and specific. State exactly your wants, qualifications and intentions. Explain your case sufficiently to guide the expert you question.**
5. **Send no question until you have read very carefully the exact ground covered by the particular expert in whose department it seems to belong.**

1. Islands and Coasts
CAPTAIN A. E. DINGLE, care Authors' League of America, Aeolian Hall, New York. Islands of Indian and Atlantic oceans; the Mediterranean; Cape Horn and Magellan Straits. Also temporarily covering South American coast from Valparaiso south around the Cape and up to the River Plate. Ports, trade, peoples, travel.

2. The Sea Part 1
S. B. H. HURST, Box 892, Seattle, Wash. ★ Covering ships, seamen and shipping; nautical history, seamanship, navigation, yachting; commercial fisheries of North America; marine bibliography of U. S. and British Empire; seafaring on fishing-vessels of the North Atlantic and Pacific banks, small-boat sailing, and old-time shipping and seafaring.

3. The Sea Part 2
CAPTAIN A. E. DINGLE, care Authors' League of America, Aeolian Hall, New York. Such questions as pertain to laws, customs and conditions local to the U. S. should be sent to Captain Dingle, not Mr. Wallace.

4. Eastern U. S. Part 1
RAYMOND S. SPEARS, Little Falls, N.Y. Covering Mississippi, Ohio, Tennessee and Hudson valleys; Great Lakes, Adirondacks, Chesapeake Bay; river, lake and road travel; game, fish and woodscraft; furs, fresh-water pearls, herbs, and their markets.

5. Eastern U. S. Part 2
HAPSBURG LIEBE, Johnson City, Tenn. Covering Tennessee, Alabama, Mississippi, and N. and S. Carolina and Georgia except Tennessee River and Atlantic seaboard. Hunting, fishing, camping; logging, lumbering, sawmilling, saws.

6. Eastern U. S. Part 3
DR. G. E. HATHORNE, 44 Central Street, Bangor, Maine. Covering Maine; fishing, hunting, canoeing, guides, outfits, supplies.

7. Western U. S. Part 1
E. E. HARRIMAN, 2303 W. 23d St., Los Angeles, Calif. Covering California, Oregon, Washington, Utah, Nevada, Arizona. Game, fur, fish; camp, cabin; mines, minerals; mountains.

8. Western U. S. Part 2
JOSEPH MILLS HANSON, Yankton, S. Dak. Covering North Dakota, South Dakota, Nebraska, Iowa, Kansas, Missouri. Hunting, fishing, travel. *Especially*, early history of Missouri valley.

9. Western U. S. Part 3
Mexico Part 1
J. W. ROBERTSON, 912 W. Lynn Street, Austin, Texas. Covering Texas, Oklahoma, New Mexico, and the border states of old Mexico: Sonora, Chihuahua, Coahuila, Nuevo Leon and Tamaulipas.

10. North American Snow Countries Part 1
C. L. GILMAN, 708 Oneida Bldg., Minneapolis, Minn. Covering Minnesota, Wisconsin, Michigan, Manitoba, a strip of Ontario between Minn. and C. P. R'y. Canoes and snow-shoes; methods and materials of Summer and Winter subsistence, shelter and travel, for recreation or business.

11. North American Snow Countries Part 2
S. E. SANGSTER ("Canuck"), L. B. 393, Ottawa, Canada. ★ Covering Height of Land and northern parts of Quebec and Ontario (except strip between Minn. and C. P. R'y); southeastern parts of Ungava and Keewatin. Trips for sport, canoe routes, big game, fish, fur; equipment; Summer, Autumn and Winter outfits; Indian life and habits; Hudson's Bay Co. posts; minerals, timber; customs regulations. No questions answered on trapping for profit.

12. North American Snow Countries Part 3
GEORGE L. CATTON, Gravenhurst, Muskoka, Ont., Canada. ★ Covering southern Ontario and Georgian Bay. Fishing, hunting, trapping, canoeing.

13. North American Snow Countries Part 4
ED. L. CARSON, Burlington, Wash. Covering Yukon, British Columbia and Alberta including Peace River district to Great Slave Lake. Outfits and equipment, guides, big game; minerals, forest, prairie; travel; customs regulations.

14. North American Snow Countries Part 5
THEODORE S. SOLOMONS, 283 Fulton St., Berkely, Calif. Covering Alaska. Arctic life and travel: boats, packing, back-packing, traction, transport, routes; equipments, clothing, food; physics, hygiene; mountain work.

15. Hawaiian Islands and China
F. J. HALTON, 397 Monadnock Bldg., San Francisco, Calif. Covering customs, travel, natural history, resources, agriculture, fishing, hunting.

16. Central America
EDGAR YOUNG, Sayville, N. Y. Covering Canal Zone, Panama, Costa Rica, Nicaragua, Honduras, British Honduras,

★ (*Enclose addressed envelope with 3 cents in stamps NOT attached.*)

Digitized by Google

Salvador, Guatemala. Travel, customs, language, game, local conditions, minerals, trading.

17. The Balkans
ARTHUR D. HOWDEN SMITH, *Evening Post*, 20 Vesey St., New York City. Covering Rumania, Bulgaria, Greece, Serbia, Montenegro, Albania, Turkey (in Europe); travel, sport, customs, language, local conditions, markets, industries.

18. Asia, Southern
GORDON MCCREAGH, care R. J. Neuman, 160 Seaman Ave., Inwood, New York City. Covering Red Sea, Persian Gulf, India, Tibet, Burma, Western China, Siam, Andamans, Malay States, Borneo, the Treaty Ports; hunting, trading, traveling.

19. Japan and Korea
ROBERT WELLES RITCHIE, Mountain Lakes, N. J. Covering travel, hunting, customs of people, art and curios.

20. Russia and Eastern Siberia
A. M. LOCHWITZKY (Lieut.-Col. I. R. A., Ret.), Adventurers' Club, 26 N. Dearborn St., Chicago. Covering Petrograd and its province; Finland, Northern Caucasus; Primorsk District, Island of Sakhalin; travel, hunting, fishing; explorations among native tribes; markets, trade, curios.

21. Africa Part 1
THOMAS S. MILLER, 1604 Chapin Ave., Burlingame, Calif. Covering the Gold, Ivory and Fever Coasts of West Africa, the Niger River from the delta to Jebba, Northern Nigeria. Canoeing, labor, trails, trade, expenses, outfitting, flora; tribal histories, witchcraft, savagery.

22. Africa Part 2
GEORGE E. HOLT, Castle View, Meriden, Conn. Covering Morocco; travel, tribes, customs, history, etc.

23. ★ The South Seas Part 1
TOM L. MILLS, *The Feilding Star*, Feilding, New Zealand. Covering New Zealand, Cook Islands and Samoa. Travel, history, customs; opportunities for adventurers, explorers and sportsmen.

24. Australia and Tasmania
ALBERT GOLDIE, care of H. E. ROBERTS, 55 John Street, New York, N. Y. Covering customs, resources, travel, hunting, sports, politics, history.

STANDING INFORMATION

For general information on U. S. and its possessions, write Sup't of Public Documents, Wash., D. C., for catalog of all Government publications.

For the Philippines and Porto Rico, the Bureau of Insular Affairs, War Dep't, Wash., D. C.

For Alaska, the Alaska Bureau, Chamber of Commerce, Central Bldg., Seattle, Wash.

For Hawaii, Hawaii Promotion Committee, Chamber of Commerce, Honolulu, H. I. Also, Dep't of the Interior, Wash., D. C.

For Cuba, Bureau of Information, Dep't of Agri., Com., and Labor, Havana, Cuba.

For Central and South America, John Barrett, Dir. Gen., Pan-American Union, Wash., D. C.

For R. N. W. M. P., Comptroller Royal Northwest Mounted Police, Ottawa, Can., or Commissioner, R. N. W. M. P., Regina, Sask. Only unmarried British subjects, age 22 to 30, above 5 ft. 8 in. and under 175 lbs., accepted.

For Canal Zone, the Panama Canal, Wash., D. C.

For U. S., its possessions and most foreign countries, the Dep't of Com., Wash., D. C.

★ (*Enclose addressed envelope with 3 cents in stamps NOT attached*)

Maine Woods

Question:—"My closest pal and I are particularly desirous of going to Maine, well inland, to settle for possibly a year or two, and to hunt, fish, work and play, but mainly to trap.

"What we would like to know is: what is the best method of living (as regards abode)? Would we be obliged to rent the land we camp on? Could you advise a good location for trapping?

"We both would sincerely appreciate any suggestions you would care to give us. We have about five hundred dollars to buy traps, supplies and camp furnishings. What licenses would be necessary?"—CHAS. T. WHEELOCK, New York.

Answer, by Dr. Hathorne:—In coming to Maine for a year's hunting, trapping, etc., it would be necessary to take out three licenses: one as a non-resident hunter, one for fishing, and one trapper's license. If you built a camp you would have to get a lease of the land from the owners, and probably pay stumpage for the timber for your camp. You might be able to lease land with a camp all put up, as there are many of them in the Maine woods, and in fairly good territory for game and fur.

Many timberland owners object to trappers building on their lands for fear that through carelessness forest fires will be started, but no doubt you would be able to find a location.

Unless you leased a camp site you would have to have a registered guide, for no non-resident can build a fire on wild land unless he is in company with a Maine guide.

I very much doubt if a Winter spent in the Maine woods would be a success from a financial point of view, for fur is not as plentiful as it was many years ago, and one must have a good knowledge of traps, and how to set them, for most fur-bearing creatures are wary and wise to the ways of man. There is much hard work connected with trapping, up early and late, and many miles must be covered to visit a line of traps, and after Winter has set in this must be done on snow-shoes, carrying extra traps, grub, etc.

If you made up your mind to try it, I should advise making a start very early in the Fall, so as to get some idea of the country before cold weather sets in. You could get your camp built and furnished, and just before the lakes and stream froze up you could get in supplies to last through the Winter. In picking out your location it would be well to get one not too far from a supply depot. There are quite a number of these in the Maine woods where the big lumber and pulp operators keep supplies for their operations.

It is hard to advise one where to go. There is a whole lot of territory in Maine for one to select from; if you don't believe it look over the map I am sending you and notice where I have marked with red ink. This is all good game country, and more or less fur. I personally like the country north and northeast of Moosehead Lake, and the section drained by the St. John, the Allagash and West Branch of the Penobscot River, probably because I am more familiar with this part of the State. But two rugged young men would probably get through a Maine Winter all right, and if they did not make a success of the trapping business they could find plenty of work in the lumber camps, with fair pay.

I expect to go into the woods for a month or so very soon, and if I see a location that looks good for a season's trapping, I will let you know. If I have not made things clear to you, let me know and I will endeavor to do so.

I think your five hundred dollars would be funds enough to buy your supplies and furnish your camp.

Digitized by Google

Argentina

Question:—"Which of the republics of South America offers the best opportunities for a well-educated man, speaking French, German, Dutch, English, and Spanish? And what kind of employment could I secure there? What are the wages?

"What part of the country is the best? Any particulars about taken-up land? Could you suggest any books about these countries?"———, Laredo, Texas.

Answer, by Captain Dingle:—In my opinion, with the accomplishments you claim, the Argentine Republic is undoubtedly your place. The very best sphere, as well as the one in which newcomers are most heartily welcomed by the Government, is agriculture and stock-raising. Land is so cheap that if a man has capital to work it he can secure a great tract at almost his own price. There are vast openings and possibilities there, and the ountry is eager for new blood. Climate is fine, society desirable, and the variety of resources make the Argentine almost ideal from the view-point of a man seeking to establish himself solidly.

Do you know anything of irrigation? If you do, you can make a fortune quickly down there; for about forty-five per cent. of the country is classed "waste" simply for lack of irrigation systems. The ground is fruitful enough, but there is no means yet of conserving the plentiful rains against a period of possible drought.

Write John Barrett, Pan-American Union, Washington, D. C., for fuller information. There is a book worth reading in J. Grant & Sons' Directory and Argentine Guide; also Turner's Argentina and the Argentines. I hope you will get what your needs call for from this.

The Northwest

Question:—"What chance is there for a young married man in the Northwest?

"I like the outdoors. Have been in the drug business for the past two years; before that I served as an apprentice at the machinist's trade."—C. R. PEDERSON, Chicago, Ill.

Answer, by Mr. Gilman:—Will forward your letter to our Alaskan editor.

Permit me to advise you, however, that a married man without previous experience in the life of new, frontier countries should be mighty slow about quitting a trade or business in the city which promises him fair returns for his labor to subject his wife and prospective children to the hazards of an unfamiliar environment.

There are unquestionably good business openings for a man of your training in the new towns of the Northwest, but I would advise you to go slowly and remember that your first duty is to your wife.

Being a married man with two children and having seen the misery through which some men will drag their families in order to indulge themselves in what they think is a free and untrammeled existence in the backwoods, just one lap ahead of starvation, I feel pretty strongly on this matter.

Answer, by Mr. Carson:—Your letter to *Adventure* has been forwarded to me by Mr. Gilman and in reply would tell you frankly that I really don't believe you know what you do want. Right at the start I want to tell you that I back to the limit his advice with regard to your wife. It may be that she is one of those exceptions that would welcome frontier life which is all very romantic in the brilliant days of Summer but changes wofully during the cold, dark Winter months when the snow is such that it may take hours to go from the house to the corral.

What I would suggest is this: you could come here to the coast, say to British Columbia or Washington, work in a mill or logging camp and get more accustomed to the Western ways as well as hardened up for whatever may be ahead. When in a position financially to look about you leisurely, leave your wife in comfort and get a job running an auto-stage or truck out of Hazleton or Fort George. The old Caribou Trail out of Ashcroft is also now thoroughly "gasolined" and offers inducements to the open-eyed. Your experience as a machinist should be of value in this line.

If you are in a position to take the stage-driving in a month or so I will send you addresses of where you could write direct to people who employ such men and you could hear what they have to say.

One word in conclusion: if auto-driving, logging or saw-mill work look like hardship to you, stay where you are, since in this country there are a great many things worse.

Read the five rules of "Ask Adventure" before asking a question.

Gold in Central America

Question:—"I have been in Panama for two years and have heard of gold in the San Blas territory. I have some money and a trustworthy partner. Is it dangerous to prospect in that region? Would it be worth while? Would the expedition be dangerous? What route would you advise?

"Has there ever been any prospecting done there by Americans? How much might one expect to make?"—OTTO VRANCK, Empire City, Panama.

Answer, by Mr. Young:—I would strongly advise you against making an attempt to go prospecting down in the San Blas country unless you have had personal experience with this tribe of Indians.

I could give many reasons, but the chief one is their extreme antipathy to foreigners. Should you make an attempt to enter their boundaries you would meet with armed resistance from one of King Carlos's border guards; and should you then attempt to sneak into the country it would be another case of mysterious disappearance, of which there have been many in the past. The coast is also closely guarded. The San Blas Indians will order you aboard your boat at 9 P.M.

There is plenty of gold in their country and they do quite a bit of placer mining and panning, but there is gold to be found in many other Central American countries without the element of danger that accompanies prospecting in the San Blas country. Why not try the headwaters of the Segovia River in Honduras? I think there will be a big rush in there soon if all signs are right. There is very little to learn about prospecting. All you need is a pan and a knowledge of gravity—gold is very heavy and goes to the bottom of a pan when water is added. Quartz may be pulverized and the dust panned in a pan.

If you still feel as if you wish to know more about the San Blas Indians hang around Wilcox's place on the water front in Colon. He gets the bulk of their trade.

Digitized by Google

All-Around Rifle

Question:—"Will you kindly tell me what you consider the best all-around rifle for shooting, where there are chances for both large and small game."—D. B. Neil, Jr., Columbus, Ohio.

Answer, by Mr. Carson:—I am going to give you my opinion and you can take it for what it is worth, since right in the beginning I am free to admit that I am prejudiced. As this prejudice is the result of a long and varied experience it may be excused.

I lean very strongly to a .32-caliber Winchester of the old pump-action model. My reasons are that the ammunition is comparatively inexpensive and more easily obtained away from the centers of population. The bullet properly placed will break down the biggest game. The comparatively limited range makes "long shots" with their almost invariable "misses" and the loss of a good hide a thing impossible. As a rule the underbrush will hide any animal that is beyond range. With a peep sight great accuracy may be obtained and "chickens" bagged without destroying too much meat. On small animals the same result obtains. All in all it makes for expert stalking and better sportsmanship.

Perhaps the best reason of all is that a long-barreled Colt revolver will use the same ammunition, thus doing away with a second belt or bandolier in the event of being in a position where a rifle might be awkward to handle or pack.

Having given you all these arguments in its favor you will probably go and get the gun which suits you best, but my choice is the old Winchester .32.

No question is answered unless all rules are complied with.

Skunk-Fur Farms

Question:—"Have you ever seen or heard of a skunk farm, for raising fur?"—M. C. Healy, Rochester Junction, N. Y.

Answer, by Mr. Spears:—There are a good many skunk-fur farms, and some of them have been successful money makers. I had a letter this morning with your letter from a publisher of outdoor books, who says he thinks fur farming will make great strides as wild fur is growing scarce.

You will find sellers of live skunks by advertising in *Hunter-Trader-Trapper*, Columbus, Ohio—it would probably cost fifty cents. Frequently the magazine tells of fur farms and advertises live skunks. Commonly, however, fur farmers trap their own live stock—use box-traps, so as not to injure the animals.

They resemble cats more than anything else; you would need to read *Fur Farming*, published by A. R. Harding, Columbus, Ohio. Also, I would advise that you write to Department of Agriculture, Washington, D. C., and ask for pamphlets relating to fur farming and how to deodorize skunks.

The skunk has six to ten young to a litter, and one litter a year.

It is an interesting subject to look into, and one of my friends in Jefferson County, New York, had forty to fifty skunks, the last I heard from him, and he took care of them without trouble. The main thing is cleanliness and good food—apples, vegetables, some clean, healthy meat, and the like. Don't overfeed, but give enough, so they eat clean but do not act hungry.

Cruising Craft

Question:—"What kind of boat that is not over thirty feet on the water-line do you consider best for coastal cruising, a yawl or what?

"What is the best kind of craft for a cruise say, 'round the world—tonnage from sixty to one hundred tons? In both cases I refer to sailing craft.

"Can you recommend a good book on navigation for an absolute novice?"—A. R. Angus, La Ceiba—Sp. Honduras.

Answer, by Mr. Wallace:—The yawl is a very handy rig and would be my choice. By lowering your mainsail, the boat is instantly in storm rig. A thirty-footer can be easily handled by two men.

In my opinion the finest sailing craft for offshore cruising from sixty to one hundred tons is a schooner of the Bank fishing type—the McManus model, semi-knockabout. With good gear and well ballasted, they'll stand anything, and they can sail. The vessels fishing on the Banks in Winter, have to take the Winter gales, and I've never known of one foundering in recent years through stress of weather at sea. They can't be beaten as sailing craft for seaworthiness and ability to sail.

Get "Navigation for the Amateur," one dollar. Outing Publishing Co., New York. "Navigation Simplified," one dollar. Rudder Publishing Co., New York.

West Africa

Question:—"I would be pleased to hear from you in regards to the various conditions in British West Africa. A party is expecting to leave from here for there. They are all experienced miners and are being employed by a British mining concern.

"I would like to know about the African fevers and the best way of preventing them. What is the good or bad effect of liquor in this respect? Is it advisable to eat fruit? What medicine would you advise taking along?

"What big game is there, and what kind of rifle is best to take?"—A. Swanson, Bisbee, Arizona.

Answer, by Mr. Miller:—If your party is going to the West African mines it must be going to the Ashantee district, a little inland from the Gold Coast, unless other mining districts have been discovered of late, which I think not. Generally speaking where there are miners the liquor flows freely and a non-drinking man is apt to find himself in Coventry—that is to say out of the fellowship, unless he is tactful and a good fellow.

The evidence on the liquor question in West Africa as related to the health of the whites seems to favor moderate drinking, more especially of light wines, since most of the food is canned, the water seldom drinkable, and thus the wines make up the food deficiency. Personally I was little troubled with fever, and not at all till a time of worry.

If one avoids worry, keeps a grip on oneself, keeps active and interested and, above all, gets a certain amount of play each day, I believe he has nothing to fear from two years in West Africa, though after that his system is run down, his blood enervated by the heat and canned foods so that he has not the resistance to sickness. The best way is not to think about it, excepting to take the precaution of a nightcap of quinin—five grains, though there are many old coasters who scoff at the practise, yet the evidence is strong for it.

Digitized by Google

About rifles. A good all-round gun is a thirty-thirty, but that is perhaps a little light for big game, in which if you don't settle your quarry at first shot he's likely to settle you. I should advise a thirty-two special—a Savage. I had my own outfit for refilling the cartridges and capping them. But you can always send down to the Coast stores and get ammunition.

You'll have to get a permit to take a gun in—at least we had to in Nigeria, though the laws vary with the different protectorates, and Nigeria being then not yet quite subjects the authorities took every precaution to guard against guns being traded to the natives. I found most sport with the leopards, which are very common. Then there are hippos, elephants in certain districts, though the license to hunt them comes high—about a hundred dollars. Anyway take your gun, and if circumstances turn out so that you have little use for it you would have no difficulty in selling it.

We did not boil the water. On this question the practical man is at outs with the scientist. The practical man says that boiling devitalizes water and robs it of its value, and he prefers the custom of the natives, which is to set an earthern jar of water aside in a cool spot until the sediment has settled, then drink at will.

Take along with you a little—say four ounces—of permanganate of potash, which is a good antiseptic and about the best thing I know for snake bites.

Navigating in the South Seas

Question:—"Would it be possible to navigate a vessel of thirty tons or more with sails and auxiliary power in and about the Southeastern Seas and islands? How about the registration of such a boat and certificate for the man who runs it? What are the chances of profit and adventure for three young men exploring the Australasian and Polynesian regions in such a boat?"—A. ASPINAITOS, Astoria, Oregon.

Answer, by Mr. Wallace:—A boat of 30 or more tons of staunch construction and auxiliary power is an able enough craft for offshore sailing. You can not do better than buy Jack London's book "The Cruise of the *Snark*," which describes a cruise he made in a small yawl among the Pacific Islands.

I do not think it is necessary to have a certificate to navigate a boat of under 50 tons, but I think you'd have to register and procure papers while bound on a foreign voyage. Get in touch with your local steamboat inspector, or write the U. S. Bureau of Navigation, Washington, D. C. for information on the registry.

Information regarding the Islands can be had in the Pacific Directory, North and South—books which you should be able to get at any nautical instrument store in Astoria or Portland. A handy book is the "Yachtsmen's Guide and Nautical Calendar," price $1.25, post free, from the Rudder Publishing Co., 254 W. 34th St., New York, N. Y., or your local book-store.

Can not tell you much about the chances for profit on a cruise such as you mention, but can assure you of plenty of adventure. Try one of the other "Ask *Adventure*" men for information regarding New Guinea and the Polynesian Archipelagoes.

Hunting In Alberta

Question:—"Will you give me some pointers on Yukon, British Columbia and Alberta? What equipment needed for a party of five on a plumage hunting and trapping expedition in Alberta? What salary do the guides get, and of what nationality are they? What are the customs regulations regarding an outfit purchased in the States? How are trapping conditions and what is the best time of the year for hunting and trapping? How much would such a trip cost five persons?"—Floyd F. Helmick, Sheldon, Ill.

Answer, by Mr. Carson:—Plumage hunting in Alberta is a joke. The sea-coast is the place for this sort of thing. Would suggest the Queen Charlotte Islands as the most accessible and the most likely to warrant a moderate amount of success. I could not advise you as to equipment as this would depend so largely on location.

As for guides for a hunting-trip in Alberta, you can always pick up a trapper or packer in Calgary or Edmonton for about three dollars a day who will cook and hunt wood and be worth a dozen of the class which styles itself "guides."

Nationality. An Indian or a half-breed for picturesqueness and dirt combined with general uselessness as a rule. For efficiency get a native Canadian, preferably one of Scotch or Irish descent.

The customs regulations demand that you deposit a sum equivalent to the amount of the regulation duty on your outfit upon entering the country. This amount is refunded provided the goods are taken out of the country six months from the time they were entered. This is all right for guns kodaks, fishing tackle and so forth but tents, cooking outfit and other equipment can be rented or purchased outright and disposed of at the end of the trip thus getting away from a lot of red tape, transportation and other trouble and at no greater cost than bringing it in. Get in touch with a Hudson's Bay post or a regular outfitting house where you will be able to profit by the advice of the factor or clerk. They are almost without exception, good fellows who will do what is right by you.

I don't understand your fourth question, "How are trapping conditions?" while as for the "best time of year, etc," there is only one season for fur and that is Winter. Prime fur and snow season go together.

As for the amount required for such a trip as you contemplate I would say at least three hundred dollars per man. Old-timers could do it on half this amount, but they are wise to short cuts and economies which you have yet to learn and which knowledge requires considerable experience to acquire. I would suggest that you make Fort MacLeod your starting-point and soak up all the information you can before going into the foothills.

The reason I suggest MacLeod is that the boys on the Mounted Police there are a swell bunch of fellows who will help you all they can to find a place where you will be able to get out in case of disaster and who will give you any information with no ulterior object. There is plenty of game and fish to live on in that region so that even a chechahko need not starve. The last of October is plenty early enough to start and with a carefully selected "guide" there is no doubt that you will at least get your money's worth.

Digitized by Google

Rattlesnake Oil

Question:—"Can you give me any information regarding rattlesnake oil? How obtained from the snake, how marketed and price?

"I am a reader of *Adventure Magazine* and live in a country infested with rattlers."—L. R. HOLLENBECK, Brewster, Wash.

Answer, by Mr. Harriman:—Split the snake lengthwise, spread the body open and fasten with small sticks sharp at both ends. Loop a string about the neck and hang in hot sunshine, after washing off all blood and dirt and removing intestines. Set receptacle below to catch drippings. Or hang close to fire, but not where it is close enough to risk scorching, as that lowers grade of oil. It is best to skin snake as soon as killed, before it is cold. Cutting the meat in small pieces and simmering over a slow fire will do if watched. Strain oil through cloth. Sell to wholesale druggists at about fifty cents an ounce.

For All Interested in Military or Naval Affairs

WE GIVE you below, in addition to those mentioned in the last two issues, a list of books which we believe will prove of special value and aid both to enlisted men and officers and to those who will make up our great Army this Fall. In our next issue others will be added.

Manual for Army Cooks. Prepared under direction of Quartermaster General, U. S. Army. Full instructions of management of company mess. Various kinds of rations in garrison, field and on march. Ingredients and amounts. Meat. Care of meat, vegetables, etc. Improvised ice-boxes, stoves, etc. Book valuable to all campers as well as for army use. D. Van Nostrand Co., 25 Park Place, New York. 75 cents.

Military Sketching and Map Reading by Capt. John B. Barnes. A handy text-book for beginners. Sketches, scales, contours, map distances, road and position sketching, map reading, etc. D. Van Nostrand Co., 25 Park Place, New York. 75 cents.

Rules of Land Warfare. A U. S. Army Manual. Definitions and rules of parole, intercourse between belligerents, espionage, armistices, treatment of enemy, property, etc. D. Van Nostrand Co., 25 Park Place, New York. 75 cents.

Engineer's Field Manual. Prepared under direction of Chief of Engineers, U. S. Army. Problems of Reconnaissance, bridges, roads, railroads, field fortification, animal transportation, etc. Many sketches. D. Van Nostrand Co., 25 Park Place, New York. $1.25.

Machine Gun Practise and Tactics by Lieut. K. B. McKellar, Canadian Machine Gun Service. For officers, non-commissioned officers and privates. Written from author's three-years' experience at front instructing men. A valuable study of the machine gun. Its organization, care, use in various types of trench and open warfare, duties of officers and men, etc. The Macmillan Co., New York. 90 cents.

Map Maneuvers and Tactical Rides by Ferrand Sayre. Adopted for use at Army Service Schools. U. S. Cavalry Association, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. $1.25.

Rapid Earthwork Calculation by C. E. Housden. Longmans, Green & Co., New York. 50 cents.

Seventy Problems in Infantry Tactics: battalion, brigade and division by Col. John F. Morrison. Lectures given by author to classes at Army Service Schools, 1907—1912. Also outlines of several others. Fort Leavenworth and Gettysburg Maps. U. S. Cavalry Association, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. $2.00.

Training in Night Movements Based on Actual Experience in War. Translated from the Japanese by Lieut. C. Burnett. Covers various places of night military movements; sentinels and patrols, quiet marching, hearing, passing obstacles, intrenching, dress, etc. U. S. Cavalry Association, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. $1.00 net.

Elements of Military Education by W. A. Brockington, adjutant to First Cadet Battalion, Leicestershire Regiment. Instruction in drill, signalling, minor tactics, map-making, hygiene, etc. Longmans, Green & Co., New York. $1.50 net.

The Model T. Ford Car by V. W. Pagé. The construction, operation and repair of the Ford car. Valuable to ambulance drivers. Henley Publishing Co., New York. $1.00.

Automobile Repairing Made Easy by V. W. Pagé. Comprehensive volume on repairing automobiles. 1056 pages. Henley Publishing Co., New York. $3.00 net.

LOST TRAILS

NOTE—We offer this department of the "Camp-Fire" free of charge to those of our readers who wish to get in touch again with old friends or acquaintances from whom the years have separated them. For the benefit of the friend you seek, *give your own name if possible.* All inquiries along this line, unless containing contrary instructions, will be considered as intended for publication in full with inquirer's name, in this department, at our discretion. We reserve the right, in case inquirer refuses his name, to substitute any numbers or other names, to reject any item that seems to us unsuitable, and to use our discretion in all matters pertaining to this department. Give also your own full address. We will, however, forward mail through this office, assuming no responsibility therefor. We have arranged with the Montreal *Star* to give additional publication in their "Missing Relative Column," weekly and daily editions, to any of our inquiries for persons last heard of in Canada.

ADVENTURE HAS FOUND ONE MAN IN FIVE ASKED FOR DURING THE PAST TWO YEARS.

FREDERICKS, FRANK,' who was with me in Newark in 1916. Better known inside as "Bottles of Elizabeth." Or any the old-timers. They know "Bottles." Tell him to write. Trouble.—Address JAMES "GOO-GOO" SOMMERS, Gen. Del., Galveston, Tex.

WILEY, THOMAS W.; brother; native Castleblaney, Ireland. Emigrated to Toronto, Can. in 1898. Later 13th. U. S. Army; and in 1907 was in U. S. Navy. His two sisters in B. C., Canada are anxious to hear from him.—Address MRS. MAGOWAN, Oralla, B. C., Can.

MOEHRIG, FRITZ, last heard from in Oregon about 1910, while then in some lumber business. Was also in California around that time. Age 47, 5 ft. 8 in., light hair, bald forehead, blue eyes. Any information of whereabouts greatly appreciated.—Address G. A. GOEBEL, U. S. S. *Prometheus*, care Postmaster, New York.

Please notify us at once when you have found your man.

SPURLING, ANDREW B., Jr., of Elgin, Ill. in the early '90's. Leaving there, reported next in the New England States. An A. B. Smith, of Ipswick, Mass., reported his death in September, 1916, but can not find any trace. Any information will be greatly appreciated by his son.—Address HARRY V. SPURLING, *U. S. S. Olympia*, care Postmaster New York.

Inquiries will be printed three times, then taken out. In the February issue all unfound names asked for during the past two years will be reprinted alphabetically.

Digitized by Google

CONWELL, JOHN A.; brother. Formerly from Elberton, Ga. Last heard from June, 1916, from Tappen and Jud, N. Dak. Will be grateful for any information concerning him.—Address MRS. R. J. DEAN, 61 Poplar St., Brooklyn, N. Y.

EASTMAN, HARVEY; brother. Last heard of 7 years ago. Then in Mandan, North Dak. Passenger Train Engineer. 28 years. Any information regarding him would be appreciated.—Address MISS MYRTLE EASTMAN, 124 East 8th St., Elmira Heights, N. Y.

FLANAGAN, GEORGE; left Sand Hill, Ont., Can. in 1872. Supposed to have located near Petaluma, Calif. His sister inquires. Would like to hear from him.—Address MARY JANE JONSSON, 2321 Roosevelt Ave., Berkeley, Calif. *Montreal Star* please copy.

MCANDREWS, DON, from St. Joe, Mo. This country is great. Write to your old pal, Martin. How are all the old-timers?—Address L. T. 352.

GILLETTE, WILLIUS. Anxious to communicate with you at once. Believe past difficulties can be adjusted. —Address C. T. M., Washington, D. C.

Inquiries will be printed three times, then taken out. In the February issue all unfound names asked for during the past two years will be reprinted alphabetically.

Please notify us at once when you have found your man.

THE following have been inquired for in full in either the First or Mid-September issues of *Adventure*. You can get name of inquirer from this magazine.

ACKLEY, JOHN A.; Barber, Robert Willis; Coresuel, Athol G. (Duke McSluhe); Crofft, Marie Gonsales; Davis, John B.; Douglas, L. D. (Spig); Garrison, Chas. Gormley, Harry J.; Hickman, George D.; Howard, Will or Jack; Jackson, Claude (commonly called Jack); Jaffeman, Noelin; Jolliffe, Arthur; Jones, Harry Bainton; McDonald, Geo. A.; Montgomery, Samuel B.; Morey, Sylvester; Schoenfeld, Ed. O.; Smith, John; Smith, Ruth B.; Thayer, Louis Merton; Thrasher, Cephas Day, called Dick; Thurston, Frank A.; Walker, Hugh Victor; Wright, Granville, sometimes known as C. G. Wright.

MISCELLANEOUS: Boys that were to sail with *The Adventure* Expedition from New York on the last of September or the first of October; H. E. F.

HASTLAR GAL BREATH, Jan Spander, Bertha Wilkins Starkweather.

NUMBERS L. T. 284. C 293, W. 311, W 312, L. T. 34. Please send us your present addresses. Letters forwarded to you at addresses given us do not reach you.—Address HARRY ERWIN WADE, care *Adventure*.

THE TRAIL AHEAD

The Mid-October issue of *Adventure*, which will be in your hands on September 18, will be one that you will remember. Beside the new Talbot Mundy story and the J. Allan Dunn novelette mentioned on page 2, there will be ten other gripping stories. You will find:

A Matter of Altruism *By William Dudley Pelley*

In which a Scout-master, a New England munitions-maker, a ten-year-old boy and a nondescript yellow dog together solve the problem of altruism and national service.

The Old-Timer *By Russell A. Boggs*

Old *Tom Deming*, railroad telegrapher, had lost his old-time "swing" and felt his grip on himself slowly slipping away. But *Tom* was the type of man who has carried the railroad and the telegraph against all odds, to every corner of the United States.

The Avenging Sea *By Captain A. E. Dingle*

The ghouls who infest dangerous parts of the coast and pray upon the unfortunate ships which fall their prey may flourish for a time—but the sea never misses its revenge.

The Leak in the Big Dipper *By Douglas S. Watson*

For some time the returns from the Big Dipper gold-mine had been mysteriously falling off. But the "leak" comes to light in a most unexpected way.

Gaston Olaf and Big Business *By Henry Oyen*

The conclusion of this stirring North Country tale is full of thrills from start to finish. Backed against the wall the corporation will do anything to come out on top.

Into the Hills *By Hapsburg Liebe*

In Tennessee they breed men who are "square as a hossdice," and *Ten-Spot Tifton*, champion of the Lower Bad Ax Creek logging-camps, is one of them.

Tactics *By G. A. Wells*

When the Red and the Blue fleets conduct an imaginary war outside Boston harbor, the charges are blank, but the damage to the reputations and self-satisfaction of some of the commanders is none the less fatal.

His Decennial Curse *By Theodore Seixas Solomons*

Sapphire City, Alaska, had become such a law-abiding town that guns were no longer toted. So when the sheriff marshaled all the available weapons and started to shoot-up the town the situation was acute.

The Diary of a Pack-Mule *By Buck Connor*

Can a mule think and feel? Read Buck Connor's diary of an Army pack-mule on the Mexican border and in the Philippines and then decide.

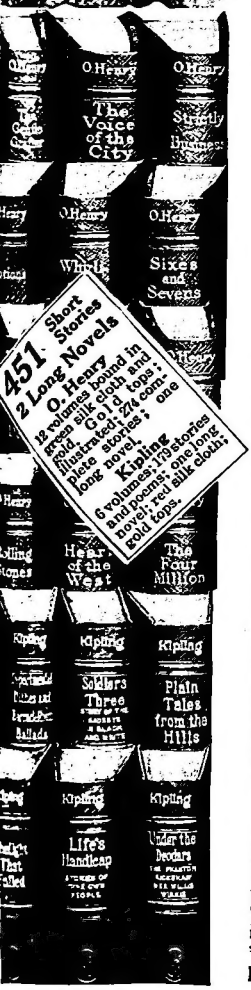
Billy June and the Sinews of War *By Wilbur Hall*

The sinews of war are all-important to Latin American revolutionists and disturbers; but *Billy June* must also be figured with.

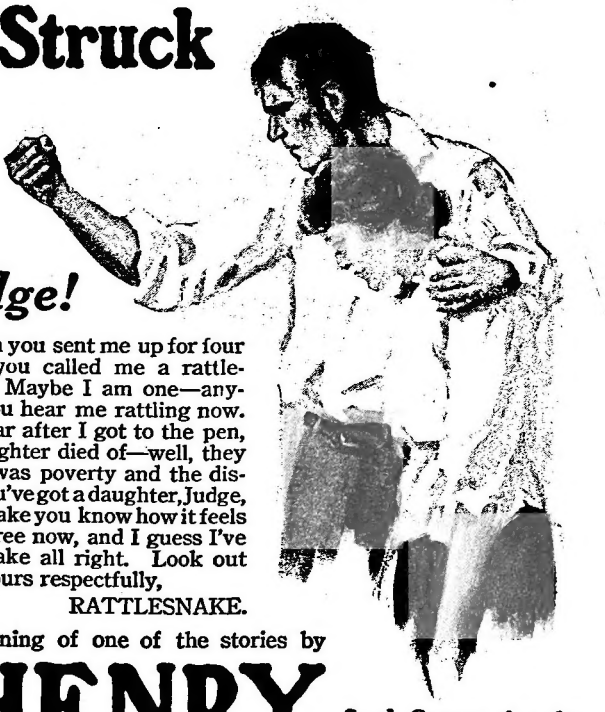
MID-OCTOBER ADVENTURE

Digitized by Google

When the Rattlesnake Struck



451 Short Stories
2 Long Novels
O. Henry
12 volumes bound in green silk cloth and gold. Gold tops; illustrated; 274 complete stories; one long novel.
Kipling
6 volumes; 179 stories and poems; one long novel; red silk cloth; gold tops.



Judge!

When you sent me up for four years, you called me a rattlesnake. Maybe I am one—anyhow, you hear me rattling now. One year after I got to the pen, my daughter died of—well, they said it was poverty and the disgrace together. You've got a daughter, Judge, and I'm going to make you know how it feels to lose one. I'm free now, and I guess I've turned to rattlesnake all right. Look out when I strike. Yours respectfully,

RATTLESNAKE.

This is the beginning of one of the stories by

O. HENRY

Send Coupon for the 12 Volumes, 274 Stories

Up—up—up goes the sale of O. Henry, higher and higher every day. Long ago he reached high above all records in the world for the sale of short stories. And still the sales climb until soon there will be no home without O. Henry. 1,600,000 already in the United States! How many thousands in Australia, France, England, Germany, Africa and Asia we cannot tell. And all because O. Henry is among the few very greatest in all literature—greatest in humor, human sympathy, in pity and understanding. The man on the street loves him; the university professor pays him homage. The sale of O. Henry will go on forever, for his is a quality that is undying. But the sale at this low price must soon be over. So now, while you can, get your set. You must have O. Henry if your library is to be complete. You must have O. Henry if you are to get out of life the beauty and fun it holds. You can have his work at half price if you send the coupon today; you can have, besides

Adv. 10-17

KIPLING 6 Volumes 179 Stories FREE

Before the war started Kipling easily held place as the first of living writers. Now we know him to be greater than ever. For in his pages is the very spirit of war. Not only the spirit of English war, but the spirit of all war regardless of nation or flag—the lust of fight, the grimness of death, and the beating heart of courage. "Tommy Atkins" is dying today in the trenches. The Taking of Lungtungpen, when the British soldiers fought as naked as they were born, gives a hint of what they may do today with a few clothes on, and "Gunga Din" recalls the deathless heroism of plain men in battle.

Price Goes Up Again!

Last spring the price of paper went so high that we had to raise the price of the books. Fortunately, we secured one big lot of paper at a comparatively reasonable price so that we had to add only one payment to the price of the books. So as long as this paper (enough for one edition) lasts, you can have your set of O. Henry at the present low price with the Kipling free. But paper is still higher now, cloth is higher, and this is the last edition we shall ever be able to make at a low price. So send the coupon now—at once—for your set on approval, free.

Review of Reviews Co., 30 Irving Place, N. Y.

REVIEW of REVIEWS COMPANY
30 Irving Pl., N. Y.

Send me on approval, charges paid by you, O. Henry's works in 12 volumes, gold tops. Also the 6 volume set of Kipling bound in cloth. If I keep the books, I will remit $1 per month for 12 months for the O. Henry set only and retain the Kipling set without charge. Otherwise I will, within ten days, return both sets at your expense.

Name.....

Address.....

Occupation.....

This beautiful three-quarter leather edition of O. Henry costs only a few cents more a volume and has proved a favorite binding. For this luxurious binding, change above to $1.50 a month for 18 months.

Digitized by Google

Vow Men

A Woodbury Shaving Stic

started making this stick
our personal use.

took the same famous form-
that had made Woodbury's
ial Soap *the skin soap*—and
ed to it a very fine emollient,
often the beard.

ien it was done we found we
a very wonderful product.

oftened the beard as no other
p we had ever used.

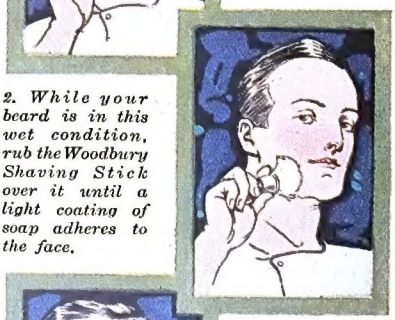
soothed and benefited the
, and gave it the same
ightful *after-feel* of Wood-
y's Facial Soap.

ends to whom we presented
ks grew enthusiastic over it,
l demanded others for other
nds.

now we present it to you.

llow the Woodbury direc-
ns for the most satisfactory
ave you ever had.

1. Moisten your beard thoroughly. Simply wet the brush by holding it under the faucet, and then apply to the face.



2. While your beard is in this wet condition, rub the Woodbury Shaving Stick over it until a light coating of soap adheres to the face.

3. Wet the brush again, and work up a lather. Make it moist and abundant. You are then ready to shave. Warm or hot water gets the best results.

The operation described
left most shavers have
the best. The individual
however, must be gui
course, by the condition
beard.

Some heavy, wiry bea
quire a greater abunda
lather and a more th
application than others.
other beards, better resu
secured with a thinner
and so on. Experience
you what your beard re

Tear out the illustration
and put it in your poc
remind you to get a Woo
Shaving Stick whereve
buy your toilet things.

Twenty-five cents at dru
everywhere, or by mai
THE ANDREW JERGEN
1310 SPRING GROVE AV
CINCINNATI, OHIO.

*If you live in Canada, Address The
Jergens Co., Ltd., 1310 Sherbrook
Perth, Ontario, Canada.*

Digitized by Google